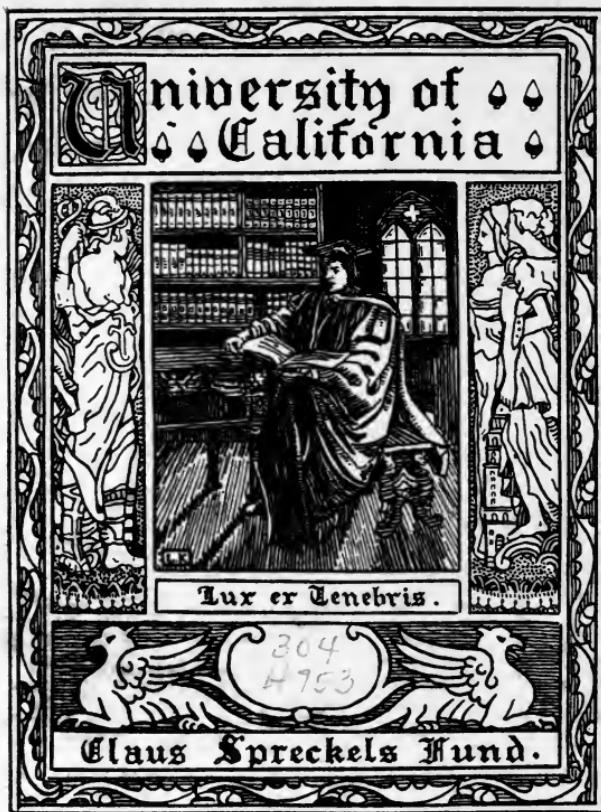


KNOWN TO THE POLICE

THOMAS HOLMES

SPRECKELS



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KNOWN TO THE POLICE



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BY

THOMAS HOLMES

SECRETARY TO THE HOWARD ASSOCIATION

AUTHOR OF

"PICTURES AND PROBLEMS FROM LONDON POLICE COURTS," ETC.



LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

1908

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SPRECKELS
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DEDICATION

TO HER WHO HAS SHARED MY LIFE, WHO HAS
PARTICIPATED IN ALL MY JOYS AND SORROWS, IN
ALL MY HOPES AND FEARS, WHOSE GENTLENESS
HAS SOFTENED ME, WHOSE PATIENCE HAS CURBED
MY IMPATIENCE, WHOSE FAITH HAS INSPIRED ME,
WHOSE SYMPATHY AND SELF-DENIAL HAVE MADE MY
LIFE POSSIBLE—TO HER WHOSE LOVE HAS NEVER
FAILED DO I GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

T. H.





PREFACE

THE kind reception accorded to a previous book encourages me to believe that another volume dealing with my experiences in the great under-world of London may not prove unacceptable.

For twenty-five years I have practically lived in this under-world, and the knowledge that I have obtained has been gathered from sad, and often wearying, experience. Yet I have seen so much to encourage and inspire me, that now, in my latter days, I am more hopeful of humanity's ultimate good than ever. Hopeful—nay, I am certain, for I have felt the pulse of humanity, and I know that it throbs with true sympathy. I have listened to its heart-beats, and I know that they tell in no uncertain manner that the heart of humanity is sound and true.

Most gladly do I take this opportunity of proclaiming—and I would that I could proclaim it with a far-reaching voice—that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, in spite of apparent carelessness, indifference, and selfishness, the rich

are not unmindful of the poor ; they do not hate the poor, for I know—and no one knows it better—that with many of the rich the present condition of the very poor is a matter of deep and almost heartbreaking concern.

They will be glad—ay, with a great gladness—if some practical way of ameliorating our present conditions can be shown.

But I can speak with more authority for the poor, whom I know, love, and serve. The poor have no ill-feeling toward the rich ; they harbour no suspicions ; no envy, hatred, or malice dwell in their simple minds. Their goodness astonishes me, and it rebukes me.

Ah, when we get at the heart of things, rich and poor are very close together, and this closeness makes me hopeful; for out of it social salvation will come and the day arrive when experiences like unto mine will be impossible, and mine will have passed away as an evil dream.

Sincerely and devoutly I hope that this simple record of some parts of my life and my work may tend to bind rich and poor still closer.

One result of my former book, “ Pictures and Problems from London Police Courts,” is to be found at Walton-on-the-Naze—a Home of Rest for London’s poorest toilers, which the readers of that book generously gave me the means of establishing. During the present year five hundred poor women have rested in it, some of them never

having previously seen the sea. Such profits as accrue to me from the sale of this book will be devoted to the maintenance and development of this Home.

One word more. I want it to be distinctly understood that *I am no longer a Police Court Missionary*. I resigned that position four years ago that I might be free to devote my life to London's poorest toilers, the home-workers, to whom frequent references are made in my pages, and for whom I hope great things. But I am not free altogether of my old kind of work, for, as secretary of the Howard Association, one half of my life is still devoted to prisons and prisoners.

THOMAS HOLMES.

12, BEDFORD ROAD,
TOTTENHAM, N.
September, 1908.



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KNOWN TO THE POLICE

CHAPTER I MEMORIES AND CONTRASTS

DURING the summer of 1904 there were in London few men more unsettled in mind and miserable than myself. I had severed my connection with London police-courts—and well I knew it. I was not sure that I had done wisely or well, and was troubled accordingly. I missed more than words can express the miseries that had hitherto been inseparable from the routine of my life. For twenty-one years, day after day at a regular hour, I had turned my steps in one direction, and had gone from home morning by morning with my mind attuned to a certain note. It was not, then, a strange thing to find that mechanical habits had been formed, and that sometimes I found myself on the way to the police-court before I discovered my mistake. Still less was it a marvel to find that my mind refused to accept all at once the fact that I was no longer a Police-Court Missionary. I must in truth confess I felt a bit ashamed that I had given up the work. I felt that I was something of a traitor, who had deserted the poor and

the outcast, many of whom had learned to love and trust me.

I am not ashamed to say that I had been somewhat proud of my name and title, for the words "Police-Court Missionary" meant much to me, and I had loved my work and had suffered for it.

It was doubtless in accordance with the fitness of things that I should retire from the work when I did, for I am getting old, and dead officialism might have crept upon me, and whatever power for good I may have might have been atrophied. Of such a fate I always felt afraid ; mercifully from such a fate I was prevented or delivered.

Still, I sorrowed till time lightened the sense of loss. By-and-by new interests arose, new duties claimed me, and other phases of life interested me. Four years have now lapsed, a length of time that allows sufficient perspective, and enables me to calmly take stock of the twenty-one years I spent in London police-courts. I do not in this chapter, or in this book, intend to review the whole of those years, but I do hope to make some comparisons of the things of to-day with those of twenty-one years ago.

The comparisons will, I trust, be encouraging, and show that we have progressed in a right direction, and that we are all still progressing. Two days of those years will remain ever with me—the day I entered on my work and the day I gave it up.

Of the latter I will not speak ; but as the former opened my eyes to wonders of humanity, and humanity being of all wonders the greatest, I have something to say.

The conditions at London police-courts in those days were bad, past conception. No words of mine can adequately describe them, and only for the sake of comparison and encouragement do I attempt briefly to portray some of the most striking features of those days. Even now I feel faint when I recall the "prisoners' waiting-room," with its dirty floor, its greasy walls, and its vile atmosphere.

The sanitary arrangements were disgusting. There was no female attendant to be found on the premises.

Strong benches attached to the walls provided the only seats ; neither was there separation of the sexes. In this room old and young, pure and impure, clean and verminous, sane and insane, awaited their turn to appear before the magistrate ; for the insane in those days were brought by local authorities that the magistrate might certify them, and they sat, too, amongst the waiting prisoners.

The sufferings of a decent woman who found herself in such company in such a room may easily be imagined ; but the sufferings of a pure-minded girl, who for some trifling offence found herself in like position, cannot be described. The coarse women of Alsatia made jests upon her, and coarse blackguards, though sometimes well dressed, vaunted their obscenity before her. Deformed beggars, old hags from the workhouse — or from worse places — thieves, gamblers, drunkards, and harlots, men and women on the verge of delirium tremens—all these, and others that are unmentionable, combine to make the

prisoners' room a horrid memory. Things are far different to-day, for light and cleanliness, fresh air and decency, prevail at police-courts. At every court there is now a female attendant ; the sexes are rigidly separated. Children's cases are heard separately ; neither are children placed in the cells or prisoners' room.

In those days policemen waited for the men and women who had been in their custody, and against whom they had given evidence, and, after their fines were paid, went to the nearest public-house and drank at their expense. Hundreds of times I have heard prisoners ask the prosecuting policeman to "Make it light for me," and many times I have heard the required promise given and an arrangement made. Sometimes I am glad to think that I have heard policemen give the reply : "I shall speak the truth" ; but not often was this straightforward answer given.

In this respect a great change has come about, for policemen do not hold a conference with their prisoners in the waiting-room, and it is now a rare occurrence for a policeman to take a drink at his prisoner's expense.

And this improvement is to be welcomed, for it is typical of the improvement that has been going on all round. Gaolers in those days were "civil servants," and were not under police authority ; now they are sergeants of the police, and under police discipline and authority. The old civil servant gaoler looked down from his greater altitude with something like contempt upon the common policemen, and this often led to much friction and unpleasantness. Now things

work smoothly and easily, for every police-court official knows his duties and to whom he is responsible.

But a great change has also come over the magistrates—perhaps the greatest change of all. Doubtless the magistrates of those days were excellent men, but they were not only officials, but official also.

It was their business to mete out punishment, and they did it. Some were old—too old for the office. I have seen one sleeping on the bench frequently, and only waking up to give sentence. Once while the justice nodded his false teeth fell on his desk ; he awoke with a start, and made a frantic effort to recover them. No doubt these men were sound lawyers, but they were representatives of the community as it then existed ; there was no sentimentality about them, but they were rarely vindictive.

The legal profession, too, has changed. Where are the greasy, drunken old solicitors that haunted the precincts of police-courts twenty-five years ago ? Gone. But they were common enough in those days, and touted for five-shilling jobs, money down, or higher prices when payment was deferred. With droughty throats and trembling limbs, they hastened to the nearest public-house to spend what payment had been given in advance. Here they would remain till their clients were before the magistrate, and would then appear just in time to say : “ I appear for the prisoner, your Worship.” Horrid old men they were, the fronts of their coats and vests all stained and shiny with the droppings of beer. Frequently the magis-

trate, unable to tolerate their drunken or half-drunken maunderings, would order them out of court ; but even this drastic treatment had little effect upon them, for the next day, or even on the latter part of the same day, they, apparently without shame or humiliation, would inform his Worship that they were in So-and-so's case, and ask at what time it would be taken—as if, forsooth, their engagements were numerous and important.

The bullying solicitor, too, has disappeared or mended his ways. No longer is he allowed to bully and insult witnesses or prosecutors, and cast scurrilous and unclean imputations on the lives and characters of those opposed to him. Generally these fellows were engaged for the “defence.”

They one and all acted on the principle that to attack was the best defence. I once heard an athletic young doctor ask a solicitor of this kind, who had been unusually insulting, to meet him when the case was over, assuring him also that he would receive his deserts—a good thrashing. The pompous, ignorant solicitor, with neither wit, words, action, utterance, nor the power of speech—he, too, has gone. One wondered at the strange fate that made solicitors of such men ; wondered, too, how they passed the necessary examinations ; but wondered most of all why people paid money for such fellows to defend them. Invariably they made their client's case much worse ; they always declined to let “sleeping dogs lie,” and were positively certain to reveal something or discover something to the disadvantage of the person whose interests they were supposed to be upholding. I remember one magistrate,

sitting impatient and fidgety while the weary drip of words went on, calling out suddenly : “Three months’ hard labour, during which you can ruminate on the brilliant defence made by your solicitor !”

All these have passed, and police-courts have been civilized ; for law is more dignified, and its administration more refined. Magistrates are up-to-date, too, and quite in touch with the new order of things and with the aspirations of the community.

Bullying, drunken, and stupid solicitors have no chance to-day. In all these directions great changes have come about, and great progress has been made.

But the greatest change of all is that which has taken place in the appearance of the prisoners and of police-court humanity generally.

Where are the “blue-bottle” noses now ? Twenty-five years ago they were numerous, but now London police-courts know them not.

Where are the reddened faces that told of protracted debauch ? They are seldom to be met with. Hundreds of times in the years gone by, in the prisoners’ waiting-room, I have heard the expression, “He’s got them on”; and I have seen poor wretches trembling violently with terror in their faces, seeking to avoid some imaginary horror. But delirium tremens seems to have vanished from London police-courts.

Do people drink less ? is a question often asked. If I may be permitted to reply, I would say they do, and very much less ; but whether they are more sober is another question.

Of one thing I am perfectly certain, and it is this : people are more susceptible to the effects of drink than they were twenty-five years ago.

Whether this susceptibility is due to some change in the drink or to physiological causes in the drinkers I do not know, but of the result I am, as I have said, quite sure.

I am inclined to believe that we possess less power to withstand the effects of alcohol than formerly. We seem to arrive at the varying stages of drunkenness with very much less trouble, and at very much less cost. The reverse process, too, is equally rapid. Formerly there was not much doubt about the guilt of a man or woman who was charged with being drunk. If the policeman's word was not quite sufficient, the appearance of the prisoner completed the evidence. But now men and women are mad drunk one hour and practically sober the next. Red noses and inflamed faces cannot be developed under these conditions. I have seen in later years a long array of prisoners charged with being drunk, and no evidence of tarrying long at wine upon any one of them, and no evidence of drinking either, excepting the bruises or injuries received.

This ability to get drunk quickly and to recover quickly leads sometimes to unexpected results ; for some men, when released on bail, rush promptly to their own doctor and get a certificate of sobriety, and then bring the doctor as a witness.

His Worship is in a dilemma when the case is brought before him, for the police state that the man was mad drunk at 1 a.m., while, on the other

hand, medical testimony is forthcoming that at 2 a.m. he was perfectly sober.

Other men, when detained in the cells, get quickly sober. Nor can they believe they have been drunk ; indignantly they demand an examination by the police divisional doctor, and willingly pay the necessary bill of seven and six-pence for his attendance. This time it is the doctor who is in a dilemma ; he knows in his heart that the man *has been* drunk ; he also naturally wishes to confirm the police evidence ; still, he cannot conscientiously say that the man *is* drunk. “ He appears to be recovering from the effects of drink,” is the testimony that he gives, and his opinion is attached to the charge-sheet for the magistrate’s guidance. “ No,” says the prisoner, “ I was not drunk ; neither had I been drunk ; but I was excited at being detained in the cells on a false charge.” And he will call as witnesses friends who were in his company during the evening, and from whom he had parted only a few minutes previous to arrest. They declare that the prisoner was perfectly sober ; that he could not possibly have been drunk ; that they had only a limited number of drinks ; that he was as sober as they were—the latter statement being probably true !

What can the magistrate do under such circumstances but discharge the prisoner ?—and “ Another unfounded charge by the police ” is duly advertised by the Press.

I believe this to be the secret of so much contradictory evidence, and this new physiological factor must be taken into account when weighing

evidence, or much discredit will fall upon the police, when they have but honestly done their duty. It ought no longer to avail a prisoner who proves sobriety at one o'clock, sobriety at three o'clock, to contend that he could not possibly have been drunk at two o'clock. I have seen so much of drunkenness that I believe two hours a sufficient length of time to allow many men to get drunk and to get sober too.

I must not enter on an inquiry as to why this change has come about; I merely content myself with stating a fact, that must be recognized, and which is as worthy of consideration by sociologists and politicians as it is by judges and magistrates.

This facility of getting drunk means danger, for passions are readily excited, and delusions readily arise, and are most tenaciously held in brains so easily disturbed by drink. All sorts of things are possible, from silly antics to frenzy and murder; but, as I have said, the varying stages pass so quickly that only onlookers can realize the truth: for the victim of this facility is nearly always sure that the evidence given against him is absolutely false.

But prisoners generally have changed: I am not sure that the change is for the better. Time was when prisoners had character, grit, pluck, and personality, but now these qualities are not often met with. Formerly a good number of the vagabonds were interesting vagabonds, and were possessed of some redeeming features: they seemed to have a keen sense of humour; but to-day this feature cannot often be seen.

Prisoners have put on a kind of veneer, for both

youthful offenders and offenders of older growth are better dressed.

They are cleaner, too, in person, for which I suppose one ought to be thankful—even though, to a large extent, rags and tatters were picturesque compared with the styles of dress now too often seen. Loss of the picturesque has, I am afraid, been accompanied by loss of individuality, and the processions that pass through London police-courts now are not so striking as formerly. They are devoid of strong personality, and the mass of people in many respects resembles a flock of sheep. They have no desire to do wrong, but they constantly go wrong; they have no particular wish to do evil, but they have little inclination for good. In a word, weakness, not wickedness, is their great characteristic.

But weakness is often more mischievous and disastrous in its consequences than wickedness.

In the young offenders this lack of grit is combined with an absence of moral principles, and though the majority of them appear to know right from wrong, they certainly act as if they possess little moral consciousness.

Again I content myself with merely stating a fact, for I must not be led into philosophic inquiry or speculation as to the causes of this loss of grit, though I hope to say something upon the subject later on.

Crime, too, has changed in some respects. There are fewer crimes of violence; there is less brutality, less debauchery, less drinking; but—and I would like to write it very large—there is more dishonesty, which is a more insidious evil.

Here again I am tempted to philosophic inquiry, or to engage in some attempt to answer the question—Are we as a nation becoming more dishonest ? I answer at once, We are.

For twenty-five years I have watched the trend of crime, for the past ten years I have closely studied our criminal statistics, and I can say that personal experience and a close study of our annual criminal statistics confirm me in this matter.

Some explanation of the growth of dishonesty may be found in the social changes that have been going on. As education advanced the number of men and women employed as clerks, salesmen, and business assistants multiplied, and it follows that the temptations to, and opportunities for, dishonesty multiplied also. For years a large transference of boys and young men from the labouring and artisan life to the clerk's desk or to the shop-counter has been going on. The growth in the number of persons employed as distributors of the necessities of life, who day after day receive, on behalf of their employers, payments for bread, milk, meat, coal, etc., multiplies enormously the facilities for dishonest actions.

Most of those engaged in this class of work come from the homes of the poor, and in too many cases receive insufficient payment for arduous and responsible services. Still, I am sure that we must not look for the reason of this growing dishonesty in the multiplication of the opportunities, or to sudden temptations caused by the stress of poverty.

To what, then, shall it be attributed ? I do not hesitate to answer this question, by replying at

once : To that lack of moral backbone and grit to which I have alluded ; to the absence of direct principles ; to the desire of enjoying pleasures that cannot be afforded, and of spending money not honestly acquired. Some people to whom I have spoken on this subject have said to me : "But these are the faults of the rich ; surely they are not the sins of the poor." And I have said : "Well, you know more of the rich than I do, so maybe they are characteristic of both." Though I do not believe them to be national characteristics, sorrowfully I say the trend is in that direction. I know perfectly well that some people will say that this is the croaking of one who is growing old, and that old men always did, and always will, believe in the decadence of the present age.

But this is not so. I am a born optimist. I believe in the ultimate triumph of good. I believe that humanity has within itself a sufficiency of good qualities to effect its social salvation. Nevertheless, I am afraid of this growing dishonesty, for I have seen something of its consequences. Sneaking peculations, small acts of dishonesty, miserable embezzlements, falsified accounts, and contemptible frauds, have damned the lives of thousands, and the strands of life are covered by human wrecks, whose anchorage has been so weak that the veriest puff of wind has driven them to destruction.

I know something of the evils of drink ; I have seen much of the blighting influence of gambling ; but dishonesty is more certain and deadly in its effects among educated and ignorant alike : for it begins in secrecy, it is continued in duplicity, it

destroys the moral fibre, and it ends with death.

I have said that the police-court processions are not so interesting as in years gone by : probably that is a superficial view, for humanity is, and must be always, equally interesting. It may not be as picturesque, but that is a surface view only, and we really want to know what is beneath. But the underneath takes some discovering, and when we get there it is only to find that there is still something lower still.

Much has been said of late years about the increase of insanity. Whether this increase is more apparent than real is a debatable point. I am glad to know that more people are certified than formerly, and that greater care is taken of them. This undoubtedly prolongs their existence, and consequently adds to their number. But whatever doubt I may have about the actually insane, I have no doubt whatever about the increase in the number of those who live on the borderland between sanity and insanity, and whose case is far more pitiful than that of the altogether mad.

Poor wretches ! who are banged from pillar to post, helpless and hopeless, they are the sport of circumstances ; they are an eyesore to humanity, a danger to the community, and a puzzle to themselves. For such neither the State nor local authorities have anything to offer. If committed to prison, they are certified as "unfit for prison discipline." If they enter the workhouse, they are encouraged to take their discharge at the earliest moment. They cannot work, but they can steal,

and they can beg. They have animal passions, but they have less than animal control. They can perpetuate their species, and pile up burdens for other generations to bear. Nothing in all my experiences astonishes me so much as the continued neglect of these unfortunate people. Prisons have been revolutionized ; dealing with young offenders has developed into a cult ; prisoners' aid societies abound ; the care, the feeding, the education, the health, and the play of children have become national or municipal business : but the nation still shirks its responsibility to those who have the greatest claim upon its care ; for these people are still in as parlous condition as the lepers of old. My memory recalls many of them, and profoundly do I hope that in the great changes that are impending, and in the great improvements that are taking place, consideration of the poor, smitten, unfortunate half-mad will not be wanting.

Surely I am not wrong in affirming that, when the State finds in its prisons a number of people who are constantly committing offences, who are helpless and penniless, and whose mental condition is so low that they are not fit to be detained even in prison, provision should be made for their being permanently detained and controlled in institutions or colonies, with no opportunity for perpetuating their kind. In our dealings with the "unfit" we have, then, made no progress, and we are still waiting and hoping for a solution of this distressing evil. To show how this evil grows by neglect, I offer the following instance :

I happen to be a churchwarden, and when leaving church one Sunday morning I was asked

by the verger to speak to a man and woman who sat by the door. They had come in during the service, and asked for the Vicar, in the hope of obtaining relief.

The man was wretched in appearance—much below the usual size—and was more than half blind ; the woman was equally wretched in appearance, and not far removed from imbecility. I knew the man at once, and had known him for twenty years. I had met him scores of times at London police-courts, where he had been invariably committed to prison, although certified as “unfit.” He had been in the workhouse many times. In the workhouse he had met with the poor wretch that sat by his side. They were legally and lawfully married, and were possessed of three children—or, rather, they were the parents of three children, for other folk possessed them ; but doubtless they would make their losses good in due time, the couple being by no means old.

The number of women charged with drunkenness has increased largely during late years, and the list of those constantly charged has grown considerably.

From this it would appear safe to conclude that female intemperance generally has largely increased.

Many people have come to this conclusion, and are very apt with figures which seem to prove their case.

But even figures can lie, for a woman who has been convicted ten or twelve times in the year has furnished ten or twelve examples of female

inebriety ; but, after all, she is but one individual. And to get at approximate truth, we must ascertain the number of separate individuals who have been charged. Nor will this give us the whole truth, for it must also be ascertained who are the women that are constantly charged. To what class do they belong ? What is the matter with them ? Why are they different from women generally ? Such inquiries as these have been conveniently avoided.

I will endeavour to supply the missing answers.

Eighty per cent. of the women charged repeatedly with drunkenness belong to one class, and may be described as "unfortunates." The number of these women has increased tremendously during the last twenty years. The growth of London accounts partly for this increase in the number of "unfortunates," and the growth of provincial towns supplements the growth of London. In all our large centres we have, then, a large army of women whose lives are beyond description, whose vocation renders drinking compulsory, and whose habits bring them into conflict with the police. Their convictions, which number many thousands, should be charged to another evil.

Of the remaining twenty per cent. I must also give some description. Ten per cent. of them are demented old women, who spend their lives in workhouses or prisons, upon whom a small amount of drink takes great effect.

The remaining ten per cent. may be considered more or less respectable, but my experience has led me to believe that less rather than more would be a fitting description. I want it to be clearly

understood that I am now speaking of women "repeaters," not of women who are occasionally charged with drunkenness.

In considering female intemperance, the above must be eliminated, and when this is done I think it will be found that the alleged increase of drunkenness among women is not proved. At any rate, it is not proved by criminal statistics. But a great change has come over women : they are no longer ashamed of being seen in public-houses, for respectable women are by no means careful about the company they meet and associate with in the public-houses. In police-courts I have noticed this growing change. Time was when few or no women were found among the audiences that assembled day by day in the courts. It is not the case now. Formerly, if women had any connection with cases that were coming on, they discreetly waited in the precincts of the court till they were called by the police or the usher.

It is very different now, for there is no scarcity of women, ready to listen to all repulsive details of police-court charges. Sometimes, when the order is given for women to leave the court, some women are ready to argue the matter with the usher ; and when ultimately compelled to leave, it is evident they do so under protest, and with a sense of personal grievance.

Perhaps it may be natural for police-courts to supply to the poor and the tradesman class that excitement and relish the higher courts and divorce courts furnish to those better off.

In one direction I am able to bear direct testimony to the virtue of women, for they are more

honest than men, and their honesty increases rather than diminishes. This is the more remarkable as opportunities for dishonesty have become much more numerous among women. Still, in spite of multiplied opportunities, dishonesty among women seems to be a diminishing quantity. I am glad to find that our annual statistics for some years past confirm me in this experience.

But my experiences do not furnish me with any reason for believing that we have made any progress with the housing of the very poor. The State, municipal authorities, and philanthropists still act upon the principle, "To him that hath it shall be given." Consequently, they continue to provide dwellings for those who can pay good rents. In another chapter some of my experiences with regard to the housing of the very poor will be found, so I content myself here with a few reflections and statements. During the years covered by my experience the rents of the very poor have increased out of all proportion to their earnings. I have taken some trouble to inquire into this question, and when speaking to elderly men and women living in congested streets, I have obtained much information. "How long have you lived in this house?" I asked an elderly widow. "Thirty years. I was here long before my husband died." "What rent do you pay?" "Thirteen shillings per week." "But you can't pay thirteen shillings." "No, I let off every room and live in this kitchen." We were then in the kitchen, which was about nine feet square. The house consisted of four rooms and a back-yard about the same size as the kitchen; there was no forecourt. "What

rent did you pay when you first came here ?" "Six shillings and sixpence." The rent had doubled in thirty years.

"Who is your landlord ?" "I don't know who it is now, but a collector calls every week." "Why don't you go somewhere else ?" "I can't get anything cheaper, and I like the old place, and I don't have to climb a lot of stairs."

This little conversation exactly outlines the lot of the poor, so far as their housing is concerned : they must either take a "little house and let off," or make their homes in one or more of the very little rooms. Let me be explicit. By the very poor I mean families whose income is under twenty-five shillings weekly — women whose husbands have but fitful work; women who have to maintain themselves, their children and sick husbands, when those husbands are not in the infirmary ; widows who have to maintain themselves and their children, with or without parish assistance ; and elderly widows or spinsters who, by great efforts, maintain themselves.

For these and similar classes no housing accommodation has yet been attempted. Yet for them the need is greatest, and from neglecting them the most disastrous consequences ensue.

The State will lend money to the man who has a fair and regular income ; municipal authorities and philanthropic trusts will build for those who can regularly pay high rents ; but the very poor are still hidden in prison-houses, and for them no gaol deliverance is proclaimed, so they huddle together, and the more numerous the building improvements, the closer they huddle. The new

tenements are not for them, neither is any provision made for them before they are displaced, so a great deal of police-court business arises in consequence, to say nothing of greater and more far-reaching evils. But I deal more fully with housing in my next chapter.

In dealing with child offenders, vast improvements have been made. To-day rarely, indeed, are children sent to prison, and we appear to be on the verge of the time when it will be impossible for anyone under the age of fourteen to receive a sentence of imprisonment. The birch, too, is more sparingly used, and only when there appears to be no other fitting punishment. One magistrate quite recently, in ordering its infliction, declared it was the first time he had done so for twelve years. The courts do not run with the blood of naughty lads, as some suppose; but the birch has not disappeared, and the lusty cries of youthful delinquents are sometimes to be heard.

While I hate cruelty and do not love the birch, I would like to place on record the fact that I have never known it administered too severely, or any serious injury inflicted.

The statement that the most powerful policeman is selected for the duty is fiction pure and simple. In London, at any rate, the sergeant-gaoler or his deputy administers the birch. Whatever else may be charged against the police, cruelty to children cannot be brought against them, for the kindness of the Force to children is proverbial. And this kindness is reflected in police-courts. Nowhere are children more considerately

treated. I agree with the movement in favour of separate courts for children, because I would not have children's actions considered as criminal ; but, in the light of my experience, I am bound to disagree with many of the statements made by some advocates of the movement. Children are tenderly treated and considered in the London police-courts of to-day.

But I am more concerned for the Toms, Dicks, and Harrys between fourteen and twenty years of age, who, having little or no home accommodation, crowd our streets, especially on Sunday evenings, and make themselves a nuisance to the staid and respectable.

For these the bad old rule and simple plan of fines to be promptly paid, or imprisonment in default of payment, still prevails ; but of this I have more to say in a chapter on Hooliganism.

Years ago the brute, coarse and cruel though he was, was different from the brute of to-day ; for, at any rate, he was an undisguised brute. Youthful offenders, too, had more pluck and self-reliance ; in fact, while offences remain much the same, and the ways in which offences are committed have not altered greatly, the bearing and appearance of the offenders have completely changed. Rags are not so plentiful as they were, and child offenders are very much better dressed ; for civilization cannot endure rags, and shoeless feet are an abomination. Veneer, then, is very palpable to-day in police-courts. This may be indicative of good or evil. It may have its origin in self-respect, in changing fashions, or in deceit ; it may be one of the effects of insufficient education, or it may be a by-pro-

duct of the general desire to appear respectable. It may also be claimed as an outward and visible sign of the improved social condition and the enlarged financial resources of the poor. The change in speech, too, is strongly noticeable ; the old blood-curdling oaths and curses spiced with blasphemy are quite out of fashion.

Emphasis can only be given to speech to-day by interlarding it with filthy words and obscene allusions. This method of expression is not confined to the poorest, for even well-dressed men adopt it, and the style and words have now passed on to thoughtless young people of both sexes.

There are no "women" to-day. Times have improved so greatly that every woman has become "a lady." The term "woman" is one of reproach, and must only be used as indicative of scorn or to impute immorality. Magistrates have tried hard to preserve the good old word and give it a proper place, but in vain. "Another woman" always means something very bad indeed ; she is one that must be spoken of with bated breath. Even the word "female" carries with it an implication of non-respectability.

Indeed, so far have we progressed in this direction, and so far does the politeness of the Force extend, that when giving evidence against a woman of the worst possible character an officer will refer to her as "the lady," not as the prisoner. Sometimes, as I have already hinted, the magistrate intervenes at this point, and tries to preserve some of the last shreds of respectability that still attach to the once-honoured word.

Here again one might speculate as to what has produced this change, and ask whether the development of obscene language has anything to do with the abandonment of the words "woman" and "female." Personally, I am inclined to believe that it has. "What did he say?" peremptorily asked an irate magistrate of a young and modest constable. "Your Worship, the words were so bad that I don't like to repeat them." "Write them down, then." The officer did so. "Well, they are pretty bad, but you will soon get used to them. They don't shock me, for I hear them all the day, and every day." The magistrate was correct, and, more the pity, his words are true. The old oaths were far less disgusting and far less demoralizing. The invocation of the Deity, either for confirmation of speech or for a curse upon others, argued some belief in God, which belief has probably suffered decay even among the coarse and ignorant. Still, if police-court habitués and their friends continue to embellish their speech with obscenity, then their last state will be worse than their first. Likely enough, this fashion in speech has much to do with the substitution of the word "lady" and the abandonment of the word "woman." It may be, after all, only a clumsy attempt to speak courteously, without casting any imputation on the moral character of the person referred to. That, however, is the only redeeming feature I can find in the matter, which is altogether too bad for words. I only refer to the subject because I wish to be a faithful witness, and these changes cannot be ignored, for they are full of grave portent.

Profoundly I hope this fashion will change, and if appeal were of any use, I would honestly and earnestly appeal to all my poor and working-class friends to set themselves against this vile method of expression, and to encourage a higher standard of thought and speech.

But I must now give a little consideration to some legal changes that have taken place, from which much was expected, and from which much has followed. Whether the results have been exactly what were expected, and whether the good has been as large as we looked for, are moot points. It is, of course, true of social problems, and peculiarly true of humanity itself, that evil defeated in one direction is certain to manifest itself in another, so that standing still in social life, or in individual life, must and does mean retrogression, when the old evils assert themselves differently, but more speciously guised. Briefly, the new Acts that have had most effect in London police-courts are the First Offenders Act, the Married Women's Protection Act (1905), and some clauses in the Licensing Act of 1902.

The former Act has undoubtedly kept thousands of young people from prison, for which everyone ought to be supremely thankful. It was, perhaps, impossible for us to have a reform of this magnitude without some evil attaching to it, for we have not as yet discovered an unmixed good. This beneficent Act has been much talked of and widely advertised. The public generally have been enraptured with it, and magistrates have not been

slow to avail themselves of its merciful provisions, though generally exercising a wise discretion as to their application.

But human nature is a strange mixture, for while excessive punishment hardens and demoralizes a wrong-doer, leniency often confirms him. It is, and must always be, a serious matter to interpose between a wilful wrong-doer and the punishment of his deeds ; but the punishment must be just and sensible, or worse evils will follow. The utmost that can be urged against this well-known Act is that it has not impressed on the delinquent youth the heinousness of his wrong-doing, and this is the case. True, he has been in the hands of the police, and he has been admonished by the magistrate ; he has also been in the gaoler's office, and bound in recognizance to be of good behaviour. But this is all, for nothing else has happened to him. He has not been made to pay back the money stolen, neither has he been compelled to make any reparation to those he has injured. The law, then, has considered his offence but slight, and his dishonesty but a trivial matter. In his heart he knows that, though he has purged his offence as far as the law is concerned, he has not absolved his own conscience by any attempt to put the matter right with the person he has wronged ; consequently, he is quite right in arguing that the law has condoned his offence. Frequently, then, he goes from the court a rogue at heart. Hundreds of times I have tried to persuade young persons, who have been charged with dishonesty and dealt with as first offenders, of the duty and necessity of paying

back the money dishonestly obtained, but I never succeeded. The law had done with them ; nothing else mattered. The wrong to the individual and to their own conscience was of no consequence.

Human nature being, then, so constructed, it cannot be a matter for surprise that the First Offenders Act failed in conveying to young persons who had fastened around themselves the deadly grip of dishonesty that the law considered dishonesty a most serious matter. Many of the young offenders could not realize this, for, to use their own expression, “They got jolly well out of it.” But such results might have been foreseen, and ought to have been foreseen.

This matter is, however, now attended to, for Mr. Gladstone’s Probation Act (1908) empowers magistrates to compel all dishonest persons that are dealt with under the Act to make restitution of stolen property or money up to the value of £10. I have long advocated this course, which is both just and merciful—just to the person who has been robbed and just to the robber ; merciful because it compels the wrong-doer in some degree to undo the wrong, and enables him to break the chains of his deadly habit. It will also prove to him that the law is not so tolerant of dishonesty as he believed. Common-sense, too, says that the pardoned rogue ought not to profit from his roguery, while the person he has robbed has to suffer, not only the loss of goods or money, but also the trouble and expense of prosecution.

Most respectfully, then, would I like to point out to all magistrates that they may now order dishonest persons dealt with under this Act to make

restitution up to £10. It is to be hoped that our magistrates will freely avail themselves of this permissive power, and make young rogues "pay, pay, pay." It matters not how small the instalments nor how long a time the payments may be continued, for I feel assured that nothing will stem the onward sweep of dishonesty, and that nothing will bring home to young offenders the serious character of dishonesty so much as the knowledge that great inconvenience, but no pecuniary benefit, can come to those who indulge in it.

The Married Women's Protection Act came at last. It was inevitable. There was a horrible satire contained in the suggestion that in England, with its humanity and civilization, after a thousand years of Christianity an Act to protect women against their legal husbands should be necessary ; but it was.

This Act came in the very fulness of time. Everybody was tired and altogether dissatisfied with the old and ineffectual plan of sending brutal husbands to prison. This feeling arose not from sympathy with brutal husbands, but from pity to ill-treated wives, for it was recognized that sending brutal husbands to prison only made matters worse. Briefly, the Act empowered married women who had persistently cruel husbands to leave them, and having left them, to apply to the magistrates for a separation and maintenance order, which magistrates were empowered to grant when persistent cruelty was proved.

Police-courts then became practically divorce-courts for the poor, for thousands of women have claimed and obtained these separation orders.

It seems just, and I have no hesitation in saying it is right, whatever may be the consequences, that decent suffering women whose agony has been long drawn out should be protected from and delivered out of the power of human brutes. But in a community like ours we are bound to have an eye to the consequences.

Women very soon found that it was much easier to get separation than it was to get maintenance. However modest the weekly amount ordered—and to my mind magistrates were very lenient in this respect—comparatively few of the discarded husbands paid the amounts ordered : some few paid irregularly, the majority paid nothing. The “other woman” became an important factor, and the money that should have gone to the support of the legal wife and legitimate children went to her and to illegitimate children. Such fellows were, then, in straits. If they left the “other woman,” affiliation orders loomed over them ; if they did not pay their legalized wives, they might be sent to prison. Some men I know found this the easiest way of paying their wives “maintenance,” for they would go cheerfully to prison, and when released would promptly start on the task of again accumulating arrears.

Undoubtedly very many women were much better off apart from their husbands—at any rate, they had some peace—but mostly they lived lives of unremitting toil and partial, if not actual, starvation. On the whole, this Act, which was quite necessary and inspired by good intentions, has not proved satisfactory. But married men began to ask, “Why cannot we have

separation orders against habitually drunken wives ?”

Why, indeed ! The principle had been admitted, and “ sauce for the goose must be sauce for the gander.” Joan had been protected ; Darby must have equal rights. And Darby got them, with something added. The Licensing Bill of 1902 put him right, or rather wrong. Under some provisions of this Act habitual drunkenness in case of either husband or wife became a sufficient reason for separation, and police-courts became more than ever divorce-courts for the poor. But Darby came best, or rather worst, out of this unseemly matter, for there was no need for him to leave his wife and his home before applying for a separation. He might live with his wife in their home, and while living with her apply for a summons against her, and this granted, he might continue to live with her right up to the time the summons was heard—might even accompany her to the court, and drink with her on the way thither. Then, proving her drunkenness to the magistrate’s satisfaction, he could get his order, give her a few shillings, go home and close the door against her, leaving her homeless and helpless in the streets. She may have borne him many children, she might be about to become a mother once more ; in fact, the frequent repetition of motherhood might be the root-cause of her drunkenness. No matter, the law empowers him to put her out and keep her out. Such is the law, and to such a point has the chivalry of many husbands come. But Darby may go still further, for he may call in “ another woman ” to keep house and look after the children. In a sense he

may live in a sort of legalized immorality, and do his wife no legal wrong ; while, if she, poor wretched woman, with all her temptations and weaknesses, yields but once to a similar sin, all claim to support is forfeited, and she goes down with dreadful celerity to the lowest depths. Plenty of good husbands, and brave men they are, refuse to take advantage of this Act, and bear all the unspeakable ills and sorrows connected with a drunken wife, bearing all things, enduring all things, and hoping all things, rather than turn the mothers of their children into the streets. But it is far different with some husbands, whose lives and habits have conduced to, if they have not actually caused, their wives' inebriety ; to them the Act is a boon, and they are not backward in applying for relief. I have elsewhere given my views as to the working of these special clauses, but I again take an opportunity of saying that the whole proceedings are founded in stupidity. In action they are cruel, and in results they are demoralizing to the individuals concerned, and to the State generally. All this is the more astounding when one realizes that the Act might easily have been made a real blessing ; and it is more astounding still when the temper and tone of society is considered.

We demand, and rightfully demand, that first offenders shall have another chance. Has it come to this—that a wretched wife, who, through suffering, worry, neglect, or ill-health or mental disturbance, has given way to drink, shall have less consideration than the young thief ? So it appears. We scour London's streets, we seek

out the grossest women even civilization can furnish—women whose only hope lies with the Eternal Father—and we put them in inebriates' reformatories, and keep them there, at a great expense, for two or three years. Money without stint is spent that they may have the shadow of a chance for reclamation. Organized societies are formed for their after-care when released from the reformatories. And yet we calmly contemplate married women, otherwise decent but for drink, real victims of inebriety, being thrust homeless into the streets, with the dead certainty that they will descend to the Inferno out of which we are seeking to deliver the unfortunates.



CHAPTER II

SOME BURGLARS I HAVE MET

THE common London burglar is by no means a formidable fellow. Speaking generally, there is nothing of Bill Sikes about him, for he has not much stature, strength, courage, or brains. Most of those that I have met have been poor specimens of manhood, ready alike to surrender to a self-possessed woman or to a young policeman. Idle, worthless fellows, who, having no regular work to do, and being quite indifferent as to what happens to them, often attempt burglary, but of the crudest description.

These young fellows evince no skill, exhibit little daring, and when caught show about as much pluck as a guinea-pig. For them one may feel contempt, but contempt must be tempered by pity. Circumstances have been against them. Underfed and undersized, of little intelligence, with no moral consciousness, they are a by-product of our civilization, a direct product of our slum-life. If caught young and given some years' manual training and technical education, together with manly recreation and some share in competitive games, many of them would go straight

on their release, provided a reasonable start in life were given them.

Idle liberty is dangerous to young men who have no desire for wrong-doing, but who at the same time have little aspiration for right-doing. Our prisons are crowded with them, and a series of short imprisonments only serves to harden them, until they become confirmed but clumsy criminals. But real burglars are men of different stamp, and, if I may be pardoned, men of better metal, for at any rate they possess nerve, brain, and grit. They may be divided into two classes : first, the men who are at war with society, who live by plunder, and who mean to live by plunder, who often show marvellous skill, energy, presence of mind, and pluck ; secondly, men who, having once engaged in burglary, find it so thrilling that no other pleasure, passion, or sport has to them one tithe of the joy and glamour that a midnight raid presents. Let me give you one example of the former.

A well-dressed gentleman—frock-coat, silk hat, gold-rimmed eyeglasses, etc.—took a house in a swell neighbourhood at £120 a year rental. His references were to all appearances undeniable ; his manner, speech, and bearing were beyond reproach ; so he obtained a lease of the premises, and entered into possession. His next step was to call on the local superintendent of the police and give him his address, asking also that the police might keep a watchful eye upon the house till he took up his residence in it. He was, he said, a practical consulting and analytical chemist ; he was fitting up an expensive laboratory on the

premises, and a good many things of value to him would be sent to the house. He himself would be there during the day, but he would be grateful if the police would, when on their beat at night, sometimes see that all was right. The police were charmed with him. He was a small man, about 5 feet 4 inches in height. The same night a mean-looking little man was converted at an open-air meeting of the Salvation Army. He wished for lodgings for a time, that he might be shielded from temptation, for which he was prepared to pay. So he went to lodge with the officer in command, and donned a red guernsey. He was employed on night-work, he told his landlady, but sometimes he had to go away for a day or two. His friends were well pleased with him ; his conversion seemed genuine, and he gave but little trouble. Meanwhile, at the large house close by consignments of goods were constantly arriving, and sometimes the frock-coated gentleman showed himself to the police. For many weeks this went on, till one day the convert was missing from his lodging. He did not return the next day, nor the day after that. They were anxious about him ; they were poor, too, and he owed money. But they could get no tidings of him. Thinking something might have happened to him by way of accident, they went to the police-station to inquire. A keen detective heard their inquiry, and kept his own counsel ; but next morning he went to the remand prison, and sure enough he found the missing man there among the prisoners. He had been arrested for " failing to report." He was on " ticket-of-leave," and had to report

himself once a month to the police. Either his religious emotion or the interest of his night employment had caused him to neglect this trivial matter.

About this time the consulting and analytical chemist disappeared, and no more consignments of goods for the laboratory arrived. The little convert was once more remanded, for the magistrate and the police wanted to know what he had been doing. The police, too, had been keeping an eye on the big house ; they thought, too, that something had happened to the chemist, so they forced the door and entered. It was verily a robbers' cave they found. No trace of scientific implements, except burglars' tools, no trace of chemicals or laboratory ; but they found the proceeds of many clever burglaries that had been committed in various parts of London. The chemist and the convert were one ; their identity was established. When I spoke to him in the cells, he called himself an "ass" for failing to report himself to the police. "If it had not been for that, I should have been all right," he said.

In a previous book I have given at some length my experiences of a burglar who is a living example of the second class ; but I have something to add to the story, for since "Pictures and Problems" was issued his fifth term of penal servitude terminated, and the man came back to me.

Twice had I given him a good start in life, for he was both clever and industrious, and in many respects honest. I do not think he would have cheated anyone, and I know that he would have scorned to pick anyone's pocket. I had

twice previously set him up in his business—book-binding. Twice had he appeared to be on the way to thorough reformation of character and good social standing; but twice, when things were prospering with him, and when he had acquired plenty of good clothing, etc., and had saved at least £10, had he lapsed into burglary, with the inevitable result—he was caught. Well under fifty years of age, yet his accumulated sentences amounted to nearly forty years; but it must be borne in mind that one-fourth of the time he had been on “ticket-of-leave,” for he behaved well in prison, and obtained every possible mark for good conduct, etc. I had not expected to see any more of him, for I knew that he had heart trouble, and, moreover, had been ill in prison. The officials had, however, taken good care of him, and during the months previous to his discharge he had been an occupant of the prison hospital. He appeared to be in fair health. The hair on his head had been allowed to grow; he had been decently shaved. His clothing, however, betrayed him, for there was no mistaking it.

He had earned £6 in prison, which sum had been placed with the Church Army for his benefit. Neither the Church Army nor the Salvation Army could find or give him any employment, and the £6 was soon spent. I saw much of him, and watched him closely, for he interested me. When he was quite penniless and apparently hopeless, I obtained work for him with a local tradesman, for which he was to receive £1 weekly, but was required to do a certain amount of work every day; for I was anxious for him to have regular

work, and to be able to earn sufficient for his need, but no more. I also agreed to find or procure sufficient work to keep him going. This arrangement seemed likely to prosper, and I felt some hope. There was no sign of repentance to be observed in him, neither was he in the least ashamed of his past ; indeed, he seemed to think, like a good many other ex-convicts, that it was the duty of the community to help him and compensate him for the years he had spent in prison. I soon had cause for suspicion, but kept silent, till one day I saw him with something that he could not possibly have purchased. I told him that I should warn the police. He did not deny the impeachment, but he wanted to argue the matter, and seemed to believe that in some way or other his conduct was justifiable.

Within a fortnight from the time of this conversation he was again in the hands of the police, who charged him with attempted burglary, and once more he went back to penal servitude. He has not written to me ; I hope he will not write. I confess myself hopeless with such men. The chances of their reformation are almost nil, and I for one welcome heartily and unreservedly the proposals of the present Home Secretary, and sincerely hope that those proposals will soon become part and parcel of our penal administration. No Prisoners' Aid Society can help such men, and those of us who are behind the scenes know perfectly that no Prisoners' Aid Society tries to help them. They naturally prefer more plastic material to work upon.

The strangest part of this matter is the un-

doubted fact that these men have within them a great deal that is good, for sometimes I have known them to be stirred by pity and animated by love ; but it requires someone in much worse plight than they themselves are to evoke that pity and kindle that love.

The following story, true in all particulars, will be of interest :

In one of our large prisons I saw an old man acting as "orderly" in the prison hospital. He was leaning over the bed of a young man who was dying of consumption. He was pointed out to me as an "old lag"—that is, an ex-convict. He was a habitual criminal, a sin-seared, oft-convicted, hardened old man, of whom and for whom there was no hope ; a danger to the community and a pest to society, well known to prison officials. His last offence being of a technical character, he was sent to prison for a short term only. What could the Governor do with him ? Solitude and severity had proved ineffectual for his reformation ; deadening and soul-destroying monotony had failed to soften him ; the good advice of various chaplains had fallen like seed in a stony place. He seemed impervious to feeling, not susceptible to kindness—a hopeless, dead-alive man.

An inspiration came to the Governor. He made the "old lag" into a nurse, and sent him into the hospital. Muttering and cursing, he went among the sick and the weak. He was brought face to face with suffering and death. Prison does not secure immunity from the fell scourge consumption, and the old man's days had to be spent among some upon whom the scourge had fixed its

relentless grip. Sometimes death makes a long tarrying, and the wheels of consumption's death-car are long delayed.

Suffering, waiting, hoping for the end, lay a young man who was alone in the world. Too ill and too near death, he could not be discharged from prison ; he had no friends into whose care he could be committed ; so he must suffer, wait and hope for the end. And the old convict had to nurse him. Soon strange sensations began to thrill the old man, for pity took possession of him. By-and-by the old man's heart became tender again, and the foundations of the frozen deep were broken up ; the "old lag" had learned to love ! He had found someone in worse plight than himself, someone who needed his care, and someone whom he could care for. As the weary days passed, and the days lengthened into weeks, and the weeks into weary months, the affection between the two men grew in intensity, till the fear of separation filled their minds—a separation not caused by death.

Would the old man's sentence expire before the young man died ?

Would the young man die before the old man's time was up ? Who would be nurse for the young man when the old man was gone ? Alas ! the convict's time was up first, and the day came when the prison-gates were opened and he must go free, when he must say farewell to his friend. The day came, but the old man refused to leave, and he implored the Governor to let him stay "and see the last of him." Surely it was a beautiful exhibition of the power of love. The old man

had passed through love to light, and the dear old sinner was ready to sacrifice himself for the benefit of the dying lad. But it was not to be. Prison rules and prison discipline could not be relaxed, and the old convict must needs go. There was no place for him in the prison, so with sad heart he bade his friend farewell and departed. But three days later he was back in the same prison, and once more he was "orderly" in the hospital.

On leaving prison the convict said to the Governor: "You won't let me stop, but you will soon have me back again, and you won't be able to refuse me admission."

In prison he had earned a few shillings, so into the nearest public-house he went, got drunk, came out and "went for" the first policeman, who naturally took him into custody. When before the magistrate he asked for three months, but the magistrate thought that one month met the justice of the case. So back he went to prison, where the Governor promptly gave him his "old job."

When I saw the old man, his month was running out.

I have since learnt that when he was again discharged, he said to his friend, "Cheer up! I shall soon be back." But the dying youth lingers on, and waits for him in vain.

Eagerly he scans every fresh comer, but no glint of recognition lights up his poor face. The officials, too, scan every list that comes with a fresh consignment of prisoners, but the "old lag's" name has not appeared. Neither do the police know anything of him. What has happened to the old convict? Perhaps, after all, his time was

up first. Maybe he waits in the spirit-world for the coming of his friend. Maybe the young man will plead for the old convict, and say : "Lord, I was sick and in prison, and he came unto me." And the Lord will answer and say: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto him, ye did it unto Me."

The police effect many smart and plucky captures. Sometimes they are aided by a stupid oversight on the part of the criminal, but quite as often by some extraordinary piece of luck. Let me give an instance of the latter.

A six-foot fellow from the country joined the London police-force. He also, as soon as possible, joined himself in matrimony to a servant-girl living in London. Her health proved to be very bad, but this did not prevent her having children quickly, and so it came about that, before he had been in the police-force many years he was in debt and difficulties. Four young children and a wife constantly ill do not help to make a policeman's life a happy one. His friends made a collection for him on the quiet, but it had little beneficial effect. The children became ill, the wife became worse, the debts heavier, and exposure threatened. It was winter-time. He left his ailing wife and crying children to go on night-duty, wishing he was dead and out of it all. As he went quietly to his beat, his step became slower and slower, until it stopped altogether, and he found himself standing with his back to the wall thinking of suicide.

Some months afterwards he gave me this account of what happened.

"Mr. Holmes, pluck and courage had nothing

to do with it, for I had just made up my mind to make a hole in the water, when I happened to look at the window of a jeweller's shop, in which a light was burning.

"I saw somebody move in the shop, so I took out my truncheon and went softly into the shop door. I had an idea it was unfastened, so I stood still for a minute or two, hardly breathing, and then I rushed at the door, and sure enough it opened, and in I went.

"The three fellows were just packing up the jewellery. One of them came for me with a pistol, but before he could get it to fire I caught him on the head with my truncheon, and down he went. Another made for the door, but he had to pass me, and I laid him out. The third came at me with a big jemmy, and we had a fight, but I was too big and quick for him. I almost broke his arm. So I took the lot; but I should not have cared if they had killed me. I was just in a mad fury, and it was nothing but a piece of luck."

Yes, it was a bit of luck. A large sum of money was collected for him by the public. His praises were duly sung in the Press, his debts were paid, and his wife sent for a time to a convalescent home. He might have made headway in the Force, but he was no scholar. I went sometimes to give him lessons in arithmetic, spelling, etc., but it was of no use. He wanted to catch more thieves, and sometimes made the terrible mistake of arresting an innocent person. The last time I saw him he told me that his wife was no better, but that she had had another child.

Not long ago a singular mistake occurred in

North London. Burglars had infested a respectable road for some time. An attempt to enter had evidently been made at one house without success, for they had left jemmy-marks upon the door, but did not enter. The police resolved to watch this house from the outside. The owner and his stalwart son resolved to watch inside, but neither communicated with the other. At midnight two men were seen by the police to enter the garden and go to the front door, so the constables softly followed and listened at the door, which was closed. Evidently there was someone inside, so they cautiously opened the door, when suddenly they were set on by two men armed with heavy hammers. A severe blow fell on the shoulder of one of the officers, who responded with a crack on the head with a truncheon, and the man inside fell on the floor. Poor fellow, he was the owner! The son also got injured, and when the police were about to handcuff him, the affair was explained. Meanwhile the thieves went higher up the road, made a real attempt, and were caught. But the owner of the house lay ill for some days, suffering from concussion of the brain, while the officer was incapacitated from duty for some weeks.

CHAPTER III

THE BLACK LIST AND INEBRIATES

IN my opening chapter a slight reference was made to the Habitual Inebriates Act of 1898.

I now wish to deal more fully with this subject, for it has occupied much time in police-courts, and has held a large place in the public mind and interest.

The uselessness of short terms of imprisonment for persons frequently charged with drunkenness had been fully proved ; they had not been found deterrent or reformative, the only practical result being that the lives of those constantly committed were considerably lengthened.

Sometimes I have felt that it would be good if the women to whom I now refer could have gone quietly out of existence, for I believe that the All-Merciful would extend greater mercy to them than they show to themselves.

But life has a firm grip upon women ; and when it is devoted to animalism and idleness, when the cares and worries of home, children, and employment do not concern them, then indeed those lives are often lengthened out beyond the lives of their more virtuous and industrious sisters.

For these women prisons had proved useful sanatoria, and frequent sentences times of recuperation.

Small wonder, then, that new methods should at length be tried. The Habitual Inebriates Act came into being in 1898.

The Act adopted the definition of a much earlier Act as to what constituted the habitual inebriate, which was as follows :

"Those who, by the excessive use of intoxicating drink, are unable to control their affairs or are dangerous to themselves or others."

I quite believe that if the framers of this Act had realized the character of those who would come within its provisions, a far different definition would have been found. But the Act also conditioned that only those who were charged four times during the year with drunkenness should be dealt with, the great mistake being that no attempt was made previously to inquire into the character and condition of those that happened to be charged four times in the year. I suppose it was a natural inference that anyone so frequently charged must be of necessity a confirmed and regular inebriate. But the reverse proved true, for the worst inebriates, dipsomaniacs, and sots, escaped the meshes of the net so carefully spread.

They at any rate did not fall into the hands of the police so frequently ; indeed, many of them did not at all. But the Act netted a very different kind of fish—a kind that ought to have been netted many years previously, and dealt with in a far more effectual manner than was now proposed.

The Act gave power to local authorities and philanthropic societies to establish inebriates' reformatories, which, after satisfying the requirements of the Home Office, were to be duly licensed to receive habitual inebriates qualified under the new law. These institutions were to be supported by an Imperial capitation grant for every inebriate committed, the local authorities being empowered to draw upon the rates for the balance.

Magistrates were given power to commit to these establishments for one, two, or three years, when the persons charged before them pleaded guilty to being habitual inebriates, and desired the question settled without reference to a higher court; but magistrates could not deal with them until they had been charged four times within the year.

If consent was refused, magistrates were empowered to send them for trial before the Judge and jury. Early in 1898 I took considerable pains to ascertain the exact character and condition of the persons who came within the provision of the Act. I found, as I expected to find, that they were idle and dissolute persons, nearly all of them women, and such women as only the streets of our large towns could furnish.

So much misapprehension and uncertainty prevailed as to the kind and sex of the persons who would be affected by the new law that the London County Council, after acquiring a valuable property in Surrey for the purposes of the Act, prepared for the reception of males. For this there was no excuse. A glance at the annual criminal statistics would have shown to what sex



the oft-convicted inebriates belonged, and an inquiry among the police would have revealed their true character and condition. A considerable time elapsed before these reformatories were ready, local authorities being very reluctant to use their powers, but at length the task of trying to cure London's grossest women of inebriety began. It was a hopeless task from the first. After eight years' experience its futility has been fully demonstrated.

In the *Contemporary Review* of May, 1899, I ventured to give a description of the men and women who would be dealt with. The women, I said, would consist of 80 per cent. of gross unfortunates, dominated by vice or mental disease, homeless and shameless women ; 10 per cent. old women who live alternately in workhouses and prisons, with occasional spells of liberty and licence ; and 10 per cent. of otherwise decent women, the majority of whom would be mentally weak.

The men I described as idle, dissolute, and dishonest fellows, or worse. Eight years' experience of the working of the Act has verified my analysis. The report of the Government Inspector for 1906 amply proves it. Dr. Branthwaite (the Government Inspector), a properly qualified medical officer, has taken infinite pains to ascertain the mental condition of those committed to certified reformatories, and who became his special charge. I quote from his report for 1906 :

“ During the eight years the Act has been in operation 2,277 men and women had been committed to reformatories. Of these, 375 were men

and 1,902 were women." He thus classifies them as to mental condition : 16·1 per cent. as insane, defective, imbecile, or epileptic ; 46·5 per cent. as eccentric, dull, or senile ; 37·4 per cent. as of average mental capacity. This means that out of the total admissions for the eight years, 62·6 per cent. were practically insane, and therefore hopeless from a reformatory point of view. The remaining 37·4 per cent. were, he says, of average mental capacity. But the Inspector can only speak of them as he finds them ; he cannot speak of their mental capacity when outside his reformatories. I can ; therefore I wish to say here something about them. There exists a large class of men and women who, when placed under absolute control in prisons or reformatories, submit themselves quietly to the authority that controls and the conditions that environ them. They obey orders, they display no anger, they offer no violence ; they are not moody or spiteful, but they fulfil their duties with some degree of cheerfulness and alacrity. Those who have charge of them naturally look upon them as the most hopeful of their prisoners. A greater mistake could not be made. It may be vice, it may be drink, it may be dishonesty, that is the master passion of their lives ; it may be, for aught I know—and in reality I believe that it is—some inscrutable mental disease that causes their passions or weaknesses ; but whatever the passion, and however caused or controlled, when these people are under absolute authority in places where the vice, passion, or weakness cannot possibly be indulged, then that passion, vice, or

weakness is absolutely non-existent for the time, and its victims appear as normal people.

But a far different state of mind and body exists when they are released from authority, for with liberty the old instinct or passion comes into fierce existence, and instantly demands gratification. While the released person has on the one hand gained considerably in health of mind and body, the sleeping passion too has gained in strength during the time it has hibernated. These persons, I am happy to believe, are not of normal mind, for they are helpless before the stress of temptation. In fact, decent as they may seem while in custody, the gratification of their particular vice is the only thing of importance in life to them. These unfortunate people, when at liberty, are in reality under authority of a different kind, and their obedience to the dark, mysterious authority that controls them is as implicit as if they were detained in prison or reformatory, for they do not question or gainsay its imperious demands. Small wonder, then, that nearly all the women who have been committed to inebriate reformatories revert to their old habits of life. To speak of their relapse is wrong, for in reality there is no relapse about it ; they have only been held by force from their old life, which they resume when that preventive force is withdrawn.

But it has been a costly experience so far, at any rate, as London is concerned. The Government led off with a capitation grant of 10s. 6d. weekly. For the first few years it cost about £1 10s. per week, in addition to the outlay on land, buildings, and appointments, to keep each of these demented

women. Though this cost has now been considerably reduced, it is even now about £1 weekly. No one, I feel sure, would begrudge this outlay if there was the remotest chance of these extraordinary women living decently when released from the reformatories.

Sadly, but emphatically, I say no such chance exists. Let it be clearly understood that I am not making this terrible statement about inebriates generally, but only with regard to those women who fall into the hands of the police four times in one year, thus qualifying for committal according to the Act. The very hopelessness of these women excites my deepest pity, and because I pity them I point out plainly their condition, in the sincere hope that more satisfactory methods of dealing with them may be provided. The Inspector claims that it is better for these women to be detained in inebriate reformatories than to undergo a continual round of short terms of imprisonment, varied by spells of liberty spent in gross orgies upon the street. He says, too, that it is the cheaper course. There is some truth in his contention. Of the exact proportion of the monetary cost of the two methods I am not concerned, but undoubtedly, for the good of the community and the purity of our streets, lengthened detention in inebriate reformatories is infinitely better than short detention in prisons. I am not objecting to their lengthened detention, but to the method and objects of detention. If their detention is to be for the good of the public, let it be understood that the common weal demands it. But as they are a class altogether apart from ordinary women, even from

ordinary drunken women, they ought to be detained in institutions adapted for women of their condition only, and the absurdity of trying to cure vice-possessed women of the drink habit ought to cease.

But the legal advantages attaching to the life of a gross and disorderly woman are considerable—far greater than the advantages that are attached to a life of virtue and honest toil. “ Only be bad enough, gross enough, violent enough, and you shall have your reward. Only get into conflict with the guardians of law and order four times in one year, and three years’ comfort in an inebriate reformatory shall be your reward. There your work shall be limited, your leisure shall be certain, your food shall be plentiful and varied, and your recreation, indoors and out of doors, shall not be forgotten. There you shall live lives of comfort and comparative ease.” So the State seems to say to the women of the class who at present fill our inebriate reformatories. And some are not slow to accept the invitation. I remember one massive young Irishwoman, who had a strong aversion to anything like honest work, saying to me one morning when she was again in custody : “ Mr. Holmes, I am about sick of this : I’ll go to a home for a year. Ask the magistrate to send me ; it will do me good.”

I declined to be the intermediary, so she appealed to the magistrate to send her away under the Act.

There being some doubt as to the requisite number of convictions, the magistrate added to the list by giving her fourteen days. At the expiration of her sentence—indeed, on the very day of her

discharge from prison—she got into collision with the police, and next day was again before the magistrate. She again asked the magistrate to send her to a reformatory. But she had another grievance this time : she told the magistrate that Mr. Holmes had insulted her. On being asked for particulars, she said that I had refused to help her to get into an inebriate reformatory, and further (and this was the insult), that I had said that she was big enough, strong enough, and young enough to work for her living. I pleaded guilty to the insult, and pointed out to the magistrate the physical dimensions of the prisoner. He smiled, and said there was some truth in my statement ; but as the prisoner was young, there was hope of her reformation, so he committed her for two years. I ventured respectfully to tell him that he had but allowed her one of the legal advantages of an idle and disorderly woman.

Drink had no more to do with her condition than it has with mine, though to some extent it was useful to her ; but vice and idleness were the dominant factors in her life, not drink.

The Habitual Inebriates Act of 1898 was followed by the Licensing Act of 1902, some clauses of which dealt with habitual inebriates, and provided for the compilation of a Black List.

Every person, male or female, charged with drunkenness, or some crime connected with drunkenness, four times in one year, was to be placed on an official list, whether sent or not sent to an inebriate reformatory. Their photographs were to be taken and circulated to the police and to the publicans. Publicans were prohibited under a

severe penalty from serving the "listed" with intoxicating drink within a period of three years. If the "listed" persons procured, or attempted to procure, any drink during that time they, too, were liable to a penalty not exceeding £1 or fourteen days. There was considerable fear and a strange anxiety among many of the repeatedly convicted as to what would happen to them when this Act began its operations.

But this wholesome dread soon disappeared. When its operations became known, the lists were duly made and circulated; the photographs were accurately, if not beautifully, taken; the police were supplied with the lists and the publicans with the photographs. But very soon the "listed" proceeded to procure drink and get drunk as usual, for a wonder had come to light. When charged under the new Act, instead of getting their usual month they received but a fortnight, for the Act did not allow a more severe punishment. True, they had committed more heinous offences, for they had defied the law, which said they must not procure drink, and their offences had been *dual*, for they had been drunk, too, and disorderly and disgusting as of yore. Nevertheless, their double offence entitled them to but half their former reward. Magistrates soon saw the humour of it, and soon got tired of it, and sometimes, when a charge was preferred against a "lister" under the Act, they ordered the police to charge the prisoners under the old Act, that more punishment might be given. But if these clauses were not successful from a legal point of view, they were from another.

The Act came into force on January 1, 1902.

At the beginning of May in the same year—that is, in four months from commencing operations—339 names, mostly women, were on that List. I sometimes have the privilege of looking at the List, which has now grown to a portentous length. It is an education to look at those hundreds of portraits. I look at them with fear and wonderment, for they are a revelation—an awe-inspiring picture-gallery! I would like every student of humanity and every lover of his kind to have a copy of that List, to study those photographs, and ponder the letterpress description that accompanies each photograph. It would almost appear that we are getting back to primeval man, the faces are so strange and weird. Different as the faces are, one look is stamped upon them all—the look of bewilderment. They one and all seem to think that there is something wrong, and they wonder what it is. No one can glance for a single moment at those terrible photographs without seeing that there is something more than drink at the root of things. No one can meet them, as I have met them, face to face, can look into their eyes, and know, as I know, how pitifully sad, yet how horrible, are their lives, without affirming, as I affirm, that the State proclaims its ignorance when it classifies them as inebriates, and its impotence when it asks others to cure them of the love of drink. These are the women that fill our inebriate reformatories, and of whom the Home Office Inspector reports that 62·6 per cent. are not sane. Certainly they are not sane, and it is high time that the truth was realized and the fact faced. Is it scientific to call their disease

inebriety, when in sober truth it is something far worse—something that comes down through the ages, and in all climes and at all times has seized hold upon certain women—a something that never releases its hold till the portals of death are open for its victims ? Oh, I could almost laugh at the irony of it all ! Cure them of animal passion elemental in its intensity ? Cure them of diseased minds and disordered brains, by keeping them for two or three years without drink ? It cannot be done. But something can be done ; only it is so simple a thing that I feel sure it will not be done. Yet if we had any thought for the purity of our streets, any concern for public morality and public decency, any consideration for the public weal, we should take these women aside, and keep them aside—not for one, two, or three years, but for the remainder of their natural lives, justified by the knowledge that they are not responsible creatures, and that pity itself demands their submission to kindly control and to strong-handed restraint.

But the Licensing Act of 1902 dealt with another class of women inebriates, and dealt with them in a drastic but unsatisfactory way. The law got hold of really drunken women this time, but it did not give them half the consideration extended to gross and demented unfortunates. It empowered magistrates to grant separation orders between married couples when either husband or wife became habitually drunken. In this Act the same definition of habitual inebriety that governed the 1898 Act was adopted, and husbands very promptly began to demand separation

orders on account of their wives' drunkenness. My experiences of the result of this Act are sorrowful to a degree ; but I expected those results, for I knew that the clauses that empowered separation orders must be either inoperative or disastrous. Alas ! they did not remain inoperative, for the number of discarded wives began quickly to multiply.

When the Bill was before Parliament I spent some weeks in a vain endeavour to prevent some of the worst consequences that I knew would follow, and have followed. I contributed several articles to leading reviews ; I wrote to *The Times* and scores of other influential papers ; I wrote to leaders of temperance societies ; I circularized the Members of both Houses, pointing out the enormity and the absurdity of putting drunken wives homeless on the streets ; I pleaded, I begged, with heart, voice, and pen, for just one chance to be given the miserable women. My efforts were vain. No one supported me. I was a voice crying in the wilderness. It might be thought that I was asking for some great thing or some silly thing. I asked for neither. Let my readers judge. We had established inebriate reformatories at the public cost. We were filling them with the grossest unfortunates, of whom there was no hope of redemption ; these women we were maintaining for two or three years in comfort. Will it be believed ? I asked that drunken, but not immoral, women should be given equal chances of reformation. I asked that when a wife's drunkenness was proved, that she should, whether she consented or not, be committed for

one year to an inebriate reformatory, and that the husband's contribution for her support should be paid to the institution that controlled her. But the House of Commons would have none of it ; the House of Lords would not entertain it ; the Christian Churches would not support it ; the guardians of public morality ignored it. Drunken wives, though physically weak and ill, though mothers of young children, though decent in other ways, were not to be allowed one chance of reformation, were not to be considered for one moment worthy of treatment equal to that given to demented and gross women of the streets. "Pitch them out !" said our lords and gentlemen of both Houses. "Get rid of them !" said the Christian Churches. Husbands have not been slow in taking this advice, for they have been pitching wives out and have been getting rid of wives ever since. But the public do not get rid of them so easily. It has to bear the burden that cast-off wives bring, and that burden grows with every separation granted ; so wives hitherto moral are fast qualifying for the legal advantages given to unspeakable women, and by-and-by, when the cast-out women behave themselves sufficiently badly, and the police take them into custody four times in a year—then, and not till then, when it is too late, both Houses of Parliament, the Christian Churches, and the guardians of public morality offer them the reforming influences of an institution for the cure of inebriety.

CONTRASTS: THE YOUNG COMMISSION AGENT AND
A BRAVE OLD MAN.

One of the first men to apply for a separation order under the Act was a thriving commission agent—*i.e.*, a bookmaker—who had married a barmaid. His jewellery was massive, and there was all over him the appearance of being extremely well-to-do. He brought with him a solicitor to advocate his cause, and witnesses, too, were forthcoming. His young wife, when asked for her statement, did not attempt to deny that she was sometimes the worse for drink, but contented herself by saying that her husband drank a great deal more than she did, but it took less effect. She also said if she did drink, her husband was the cause of it, for he was unfaithful to her. She readily agreed to her husband's offer of £1 weekly, so the order was promptly granted, and she went her way alone. The husband, I noticed, was not so lonely, being accompanied by a well-dressed female.

The second act of this unseemly farce was played before the same court after a three months' interval. The commission agent, again fortified by his solicitor's presence, applied for an abrogation of the order made upon him for his wife's maintenance. Her lapse into immorality was duly proved, her defence—which, of course, was no defence at all—being that her husband was worse than herself, for he had been living with the woman now in court for some months. The magistrate had no option—for private opinion must not prevent the due fulfilment of the law—so the order

was quashed. Henceforth the husband was free of all obligations, pecuniary or otherwise, excepting that he might not legally marry till his wife's death. Whatever her faults were, I must confess that I felt very sorry for her. Young, friendless, and homeless, she was already on that polished, inclined plane down which many are precipitated to the lowest depths, from which nothing short of a miracle could save her. A few minutes later I was speaking to her outside the court, and asking about her future, when the opulent commission agent and his expensively dressed but non-legalized wife passed us. Triumph was written on his coarse face, and, turning to his cast-off wife, he snapped his fingers in her face, and said : "I knew I should soon get rid of you !" using, of course, vulgar embellishment. To such contemptible blackguards, men without an atom of decency, this Act has provided a ready means for getting rid of wives when their company proves distasteful. But oh the chivalry of it, especially when the fellow who participated in the wife's wrong-doing comes cheerfully to give evidence against her ! When I think on these things, I believe that I have some faith still in physical chastisement.

But I turn gladly—nay, eagerly—to another side of the question ; for all men are not made on the same lines as the opulent bookie, for which we have need to be thankful. Among some of the men who, driven almost distraught by the misery they had endured—and only those who have to endure it can tell how great that misery is—have applied for separation orders on account

of their wives' habitual drunkenness, I have met some that shone resplendent amid the moral darkness so often connected with police-court cases.

A sorrowful-faced old man, nearly seventy years of age, applied to the magistrate for advice. His wife for some years had been giving way constantly to drink. His home was ruined ; he was in debt. He produced a bundle of pawn-tickets, etc. "Have you any sons and daughters ? Cannot they influence her ?" "They are married, and are all abroad. They cannot help me ; but they send me money when I require any. They want me to go to them, but I cannot leave her." "Do you earn any money ?" "Oh yes ! quite sufficient to keep us. I have had a good place for forty years." "Well," said the magistrate, "I cannot advise you, but you can have a summons against her for habitual drunkenness. Will you have one ?" "Yes, sir," said the bewildered old man. The summons was served upon the wife, and in due time they appeared before the court.

A pathetic couple they were ; neither of them appeared to exactly understand why they were there. He knew that he had to prove his wife's drunkenness, and he did it simply enough. It was the old, old story of drink, neglect, waste, and dirt—no food provided, no house made tidy, no beds made, no washing of clothes. That was the negative side. The pawnings and debts, and cuts and wounds she had received from falling, formed the positive.

The old woman denied nothing, but said it was

all true. When asked for her defence, she could only reiterate : "He's been very good to me ; he's been very good to me." When asked about his means, the old man said he thought that he could allow his wife 10s. a week. The magistrate thought that 7s. was as much as he could afford, and made the order accordingly. The couple waited in court till the separate orders were delivered to them, and then tremblingly rose to go, he to his lonely home and she to —. I accompanied them into the streets, and said to the old woman : "Where are you going to live ?" She replied : "I am going home." "But you are separated. The magistrate has given your husband an order which says that you must no longer live with him." "Not live with my husband ! Where am I to live, then ?" I do not think that either of them understood till that moment what a separation order meant, for the old man said : "You can't live anywhere else." Then, turning to me, he said half defiantly : "I suppose I can take her back home if I like ?" "Certainly," I said ; "but you cannot come to the magistrate for another order." "I will never ask for another. I don't want this "; and he tore it in twain.

"Come on." And he offered his arm to his old and bewildered partner, and away they went—he to endure patiently and still to hope ; she, touched by his faithful love, to struggle and, perchance, to conquer. He was a brave old man—a Sir Galahad with bent back and frosty locks. I watched them as they slowly disappeared along the street. Old as they were, they were passing

through love to light. For I saw them many times after that day ; I made it my business to see them, and to give them such encouragement as I could : they sorely needed it. So I learned the story of their lives.

She had been a good wife and mother till late in life. Then her children had all dispersed, and great loneliness came upon her. She had not even the prattle of a grandchild to cheer her. Her husband was away so much from home, for he worked many hours.

Old age steals away the power of self-control, and loneliness is hard to bear, and drink promised to cheer her. The old man's faithfulness was her only anchorage, but it held. The battle went sometimes against her, but from the day they stood before the magistrate the old woman began to gain strength, and with strength came hope and happier days.

I have selected these two instances because they fully illustrate the dangers and the weakness of this system. But these two by no means stand alone, and I am not exaggerating when I say that hundreds of men have consulted me about their wives' drunkenness, all of them expecting some help or relief from the Act. When I have explained to them exactly how it affected them and what a separation order meant, by far the greater number went away sorrowing, and most of them have added : "I thought she would be put in a home for a time, where I could pay a little for her. I cannot put her homeless into the streets ; I should not be able to sleep if I knew she was out." Of course not ; what decent husband could ?

And this feeling has, I am glad to say, been characteristic of husbands who have suffered intensely and long, and who through it all have been good and patient husbands. I do not wish it to be understood that I think evil of every husband who enforces a separation order on account of his wife's habitual drunkenness—far from it ; for I know only too well that with some it has been a bitter and last resource, nothing else being apparently possible. But I do say this, and for this reason I have told the above stories : that this law places it in the power of a worthless husband, who cares not what becomes of his wife, to get rid of her and his responsibilities at practically the same time, but does nothing for the unfortunate husband who hopes for his wife's reformation, and who has still some respect for her ; also that it consigns wretched women to a position that is certain to bring about their complete demoralization, for it submits them to temptations they cannot withstand.



CHAPTER IV

POLICE-COURT MARRIAGES

THE fashion that has arisen of late years of judges or magistrates engineering weddings among the wretched and often penniless people who sometimes come before them savours of indecency. Such proceedings ought to have no place in our courts of penal administration. The effects of thriftless and ill-assorted marriages are so palpable in police-courts that one wonders to what malign source of inspiration the suggestion that some criminal youth or some vicious young woman can be reincarnated by marriage is to be attributed.

Some of the most effective and eloquent homilies I have ever listened to have been delivered from the bench upon youthful and thriftless marriages, and upon the folly of obtaining household goods by the hire-purchase system.

In spite, however, of the well-known results of such marriages—for squalor and misery inevitably attend them—educated gentlemen of position and experience appear to take pleasure in arranging them, and Police-Court Missionaries find occupation and joy in seeing the arrangements duly carried out.

The altogether unwholesome effect of arranging these marriages is considerably enhanced by the press, which duly chronicles in heavy type and sensational headings a "Police-Court Romance."

Romance ! I would like to find the romance. I have seen much of the results of such marriages, but I never discovered any romance ; they were anything but romantic. While I have seen the results, and have had to alleviate some of the miseries following such marriages, I am thankful to say that I never did anything quite so foolish as to take part in arranging or giving any assistance in carrying out the arrangements for a single marriage of this description.

Many years ago I was asked by a worthy magistrate to see that the arrangements for a marriage of this kind were duly carried out ; I told him that I must respectfully decline.

He reminded me, with a humorous twinkle in the eye, "that marriages were made in heaven." The reply was obvious : "Sometimes in hell, your Worship." And the sequel proved my reply to be true. Magistrates seldom see the after-results, but those results are far-reaching. From this one case alone grievous burdens have already been cast upon the public, and future generations will be called upon to bear an aggravated burden. For in a short time the couple were homeless, with three young children, and were found sleeping, or trying to sleep, in a van one winter's night.

It requires no prophetical vision to see the consequences of these marriages, but a few instances may stimulate imagination.

Three years ago a decent-looking young woman

of twenty was charged in one of our courts with abandoning her illegitimate child. She was young, pretty, and told a sad tale about her wrongs.

The press account of the matter appeared with such embellishment as befitted a "romance," for a young man had risen in court and offered to marry the girl, and make her into an "honest woman." Now, this chivalrous young man had not seen the girl previously—they were complete strangers ; nevertheless, the magistrate adjourned the case, and offered a sovereign towards the wedding expenses. The hero in this business—the chivalrous young man !—was penniless and out of work ; in fact, if he himself spoke truly, he had done no work for a year ; but, seeing publicity had been gained and interest excited, he wrote a letter to the press, asking the public to supplement the magistrate's contribution, and supply him with funds to furnish a home for himself and future wife. His letter was not published, but it was sent in to me by the editor, for I had written to the press on the subject.

I have said that he was out of work, and certainly he was likely to remain out of work, for he was one of the audience to be seen regularly at the police-court, many of whom never seem to seek for work. I have no hesitation in saying that the man who comes forward in a police-court and offers to marry a young woman to whom he is a complete stranger, and who is, moreover, charged with serious crime, is either a fool or a rogue—probably both.

Why magistrates should smile on these impromptu proposals, and order remands that the

consummation may take place, I cannot possibly understand. If I were a magistrate and a fellow came forward with a like proposal, I would order him out of court ; in fact, I should experience some pleasure in kicking him out. But in this case the magistrate gave a fatherly benediction and twenty shillings. The missionary, too, was by no means out of it, for he afterwards took some credit for this sorry business.

The true story of the girl came out afterwards. It was not one to excite pity, for it was a shameful one to a degree. But morbid, and I think I may say maudlin, sympathy is one of the prevailing evils of the day, and is not founded in real pity or love, or controlled by common-sense or by the least discretion, as the following will show :

The case of a young woman in whom I was interested was placed before the public as a "romance," and consequently well advertised. She was by no means a desirable person ; as a matter of fact, there was nothing to be said in her favour. The untrue statement she made before the magistrate was, however, duly circulated. In a few days I received a large number of letters, many of them from men with proposals of marriage. I did the best thing possible by burning the latter, with one exception, for this interested me, as it contained a membership ticket of a religious society.

The writer told me that he was a God-fearing man, a Church member for many years, a carpenter in business on his own account, a widower with several children ; that he had prayed over the matter, and it was laid upon his conscience that he must marry the young woman and save

her. He also enclosed a postal order for 10s., and asked me to pay her rail-fare and send him a telegram. I returned his membership ticket, his letter, and his postal order, and some words of my own—brief and pointed :

“ SIR,

“ You may be a well-meaning man, but you are an ass. What right have you to submit your children to the care of an abandoned woman ? Marry some decent woman you are acquainted with, and save them and yourself.

“ Yours truly,

“ T. HOLMES.”

Quite recently a Police-Court Missionary told us through the press that he had arranged seventy such weddings, that he raised £200 to give the various couples a start in life, many of whom were so poor that he loaned them a wedding-ring for the ceremony, as he always kept one by him for emergencies. Yet he assured us, in spite of the poverty of the persons concerned, and notwithstanding the disgraceful circumstances that had brought them within his province, all these marriages had turned out happily. I sincerely wish that I could believe in the happiness of couples of this description, married under such circumstances, but I cannot, for my experience of them has been so very different. Indeed, I was not surprised to read an account in the press of the trial of a young man for the murder of his wife, when the wife's mother stated that the marriage had been arranged by a Police-Court Missionary.

When I reflect upon this subject, I must confess myself astonished that our Bishops and clergy, who insist so strongly on the sacredness of marriage and of its indissolubility, are silent upon the matter, and have no advice to give to their representatives upon it.

Especially am I surprised that our good Bishop of London, who is conversant with every phase of London life, and who has spoken so fearlessly upon the extent and evils of immorality, is silent on police-court marriages and police-court separations ; for these marriages are none the less immoral though they be legalized by the State and blessed by the Church, and the evils of them will not bear recapitulation. On divorce our leaders have much to say ; on marriage with deceased wives' sisters they have advice to give. Are the poor to have no guidance ? Are penniless, ignorant, and often gross young people to be engineered into promiscuous marriage without a protest ? Is the widespread evil that attaches to wholesale "separation " of no consequence ? Are these and suchlike arrangements good enough for the poor ?

But there is another light in which these engineered marriages must be considered. Not very long since one of our judges had before him a young man charged with the attempted murder of the girl with whom he had kept company. His jealousy and brutality had alarmed her, so she had given him up. But he was not to be got rid of so easily, for he waylaid her and attempted to murder her by cutting her throat. He was charged, but the charge was reduced to one of grievous bodily harm. At the trial the young

woman was asked by the judge whether she would consent to marry the prisoner, adding that if she would consent it would make a difference in the sentence imposed. The matter was adjourned to the next session, the prisoner being allowed his liberty that the marriage might be effected. During the adjournment they were married, and when next before the magistrate the marriage certificate was produced. She saved the man from prison, and the judge bestowed his benediction in the following words : "Take her away" (as if, forsooth, she had been the prisoner) "and be good to her. You have assaulted her before : don't do it again"—thus giving him every opportunity of doing at his leisure what he had barely failed to do in his haste. I ask, Is not a procedure of this kind a grave misuse of the power of the courts ? Is there any justice about it ? Is it fair to place on a young and inexperienced girl the onus of deciding whether or not her would-be murderer shall be punished ? Is there any sense of propriety in holding a half-veiled threat over her, and inducing her, against her better judgment, to marry a jealous and murderous brute ? I can find no satisfactory answers to these questions, and contend such proceedings ought to be impossible in our courts of justice.

If our penal administrators think that brutality, jealousy, and murderous instincts can be cured by matrimonial ties, especially when these ties are forged and riveted under such circumstances, then their knowledge of human nature is small indeed.

The jealous brute when single is in all conscience bad enough, but when married he is in-

finitely worse ; for with him jealousy becomes an absolute mania, and tragedy is almost inevitable. It must not be understood that all magistrates and judges bring pressure to bear on wretched or sinning couples for the purpose of compelling matrimony, for this is not the case. We have need to be thankful that comparatively few do so. But there is enough of this business done to warrant my calling attention to it, and in expressing the hope that "romance" of this kind may speedily die a death from which there is no resurrection. It may be that among the long list of sordid cases that come before the courts there are some in which marriage seems the best way out of the tangle, financial or otherwise. Sometimes, perhaps, it is the only honourable course, especially where the mother of a child is desirous of it. But it must be remembered that in these cases the parties have had plenty of opportunity for marriage previous to appearing before the court, and would have like opportunities after going from the court, without magistrates intervening.

But it becomes a public matter when judges or magistrates use their positions and the power of the law to compel young people, sometimes mere boys and girls, to marry.

Better a thousand times that many should bear the ills and sorrows that they have, and go through life with the shadow of disgrace over them, rather than take as partners those that have been either forced by circumstances or terrorized by representatives of the law into the unhappy position.

It may seem strange that, while some of our

judges, magistrates, and missionaries betray anxiety to hurry on these indecent marriages, and to coerce penniless young people into them, the State should find ready means for undoing them. It is no uncommon thing for very young women who have been married but a few months to apply for separation orders and maintenance orders. I may add also that it is no uncommon thing for magistrates to grant them. The extent to which separation prevails may be gathered from the fact that under the Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women) Act, 1895, there have been granted up to the end of 1906 (the latest date for which statistics are available) 72,537 separation orders; and, assuming the average for the years 1902 to 1906 to be maintained, up to the end of 1907 there would have to be added a further 1,048 separation orders, making a total since the Act came into force of 79,583 such orders.

Surely these figures ought to compel serious thought.

CHAPTER V

EXTRAORDINARY SENTENCES

I OWE my readers an apology for introducing this chapter, inasmuch as it does not deal chiefly with my own experiences, but with two extraordinary sentences recently given, and made public through the press ; though it is fair to say that I know something of the friends in the one case and the victims in the other of the prisoners who received those sentences. I have seen nothing during my personal experiences to cause me any misgivings as to the administration of justice. I have not seen people punished for crimes they had not committed, but I have seen a large number of prisoners discharged about whose guilt there was no moral doubt. It stands to the credit of our penal system that it is much easier for a guilty man to escape than it is for an innocent man to be punished. This is a just and safe position. I would like also to say that among all the sentences that I have known imposed upon prisoners, there have been very few—indeed, scarcely any—that I have thought did not meet the justice of the case. I have, therefore, no sympathy with the organized out-

cries that are from time to time raised against our judges and magistrates and the police. Judges and magistrates are but human, and that they will err sometimes in their judgments is certain. We censure them sometimes because their sentences are too severe ; we blame them sometimes because they have been too lenient ; but it is always well to remember that judges and magistrates see and know more of the attendant circumstances of a case than the press and the public possibly can see or know. This knowledge, of course, cannot have any bearing on the question of guilt or innocence ; but it can have, and ought to have, some effect upon the length of sentence imposed.

Within limits, then, judges and magistrates must be allowed latitude with regard to degrees of sentence, for a cast-iron method allowing no latitude would entail a tremendous amount of injustice.

Nine times out of ten, when a judge or magistrate errs in the imposition of sentence, he errs on the side of leniency, and it is right that it should be so. But an error on the side of mercy does not create a public sensation ; and this speaks well for the public, for it is good to know that the community is better pleased to hear of leniency than of severity. Nevertheless, an error on the side of leniency is an error, and may be followed with results as disastrous as those that follow from an error on the side of severity ; for while those results are not so quickly palpable, they may be more extensive.

I want, then, in this chapter to select two

sentences—one given by a judge, the other by a magistrate : the judge erring, in my opinion, on the side of severity ; the magistrate erring, in my judgment, on the side of leniency.

Neither of these sentences seems to have attracted public attention, though both are of recent date.

Let me quote from a letter received on June 4, 1907 :

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I hope you will excuse me writing to you about my son, who is a young man not twenty-three years of age.

“ He is a carpenter and joiner, and has a good little business of his own, with a shop and yard.

“ On January 4, 1906, there was a burglary at the house next to mine, and in a fortnight after my son was arrested on suspicion. The people—very old friends of ours—being awake, heard voices, but did not recognize one of the voices as that of my son.

“ At the trial there was no evidence produced to prove that my son was in the house. My wife and myself are prepared to say that he went to bed at ten o’clock, and that we called him at seven o’clock next morning.

“ The jury brought my son in guilty, and the judge gave him *fourteen years’ penal servitude*. The whole court was shocked ; no one could understand it. I cannot understand it, for I have read many instances of real old criminals, after committing robberies, being sentenced to a few months or a year or so. But fourteen years for a young man ! Oh, sir, my family have lived in

this old town for nearly three hundred years, and no member of it had ever been in a prisoner's dock till now. I have written to the Home Secretary, and his answer was that he could not at present interfere. I pray to Heaven that you will be kind enough to write to him and beg of him to pardon my son. I am sending to you a paper with a full account of the trial.

"I remain,

"Yours truly,

"X."

I have that paper now before me—the *Coventry Times*, dated Wednesday, December 12, 1906. The trial took place on the previous Friday at Warwick Assizes. Taylor was charged with breaking and entering, and feloniously stealing twenty-four farthings, one gold locket, one metal chain, and ten spoons; to make assurance doubly sure, he also was charged with receiving the same property. Taylor had been in custody since January 23, 1906. On December 7 of the same year he received his extraordinary sentence, after being detained in prison nearly eleven months. Everything seems extraordinary about this case—the long delay before trial, the severe sentence, the trumpery character of the articles stolen. I express no opinion about the prisoner's guilt. Some of the articles were found in his possession, and it was proved that he had been spending farthings. That the people whose house had been entered did not suspect the prisoner was clear, as they sent for him next morning to repair the door that had been broken. But, at any rate, the jury

believed Taylor guilty, for, without leaving the box, they gave their verdict to that effect.

One of the objects of the burglary appears to have been the acquisition of the silver teaspoons.

Mrs. Wilson, the prosecutor's wife, had been previously married to a man named Vernon, and the spoons in question belonged to him. It was said that the friends of Vernon wanted the spoons, and Mrs. Wilson admitted that "they would like them; but they had let her alone for twenty years."

These spoons disappeared. They were not found in Taylor's possession, but someone had undoubtedly taken them. Mrs. Wilson stated in her evidence that after the burglary there was a piece of paper left on the parlour table, on which was written in pencil the words, "Mrs. Vernon, after twenty years"; but this paper was missing, and the prisoner's mother had been in the parlour and had seen the paper, which could not be found after she left.

Whether Taylor committed a trumpery burglary, or whether he did the thing out of mean spirit, or whether he was in collusion with others, does not matter very much. Punishment he doubtless deserved, but fourteen years for a young man for a silly offence seems beyond the bound of credibility. But it is true; for in June, 1907, I approached the Home Secretary, begging for a revision of the sentence, and received a reply similar to that sent to the prisoner's father—that it was too early a date for interference. It is only fair to assume that the judge was in possession of knowledge that justified his words, if not his sentence, for in addressing the prisoner he

said : " You have been convicted, and properly convicted ; but I know the sort of man you are, from this case and from the fact that there is another charge against you in this calendar. Fourteen years' penal servitude ! "

I am not surprised to read that " The prisoner appeared to be stunned when he heard the sentence, and fell into the warders' arms who surrounded him !" I am not surprised to read that the prisoner's father and mother rose to their feet, and that the one shouted, " He is innocent !" and that the other went into hysterics ; but I am surprised to read that an English judge could not allow something for parental feelings, and that he said fiercely : " Take those people away !" and when the prisoner's father shouted, " I can go out, but he is innocent !" that the judge instantly retorted : " If you don't go out, I will commit you to prison." Fourteen years for a young man of twenty-two ! Fourteen years for a first offender ! It requires an effort to make oneself believe it, but it is a fact.

I should like to know what was at the back of Mr. Justice Ridley's mind when he gave that sentence. Surely he had some reasons that he, at any rate, considered sufficient to justify it. It is difficult to imagine what they were, for no personal violence had been offered, no firearms had been carried, no burglar's tools had been discovered. Taylor was not even suspected of connection with any professional criminals. It was, moreover, the first time he had been in the hands of the police. Taylor seems to have been industrious, for at twenty-two years of age he was in

business on his own account. I can't help thinking that there was something wrong with Taylor, some mental twist or peculiarity ; for, admitting him to be guilty, he acted like a fool. To leave a piece of paper, in his own handwriting, referring to matters of which only intimate friends could have knowledge, was of itself an extraordinary thing ; but to go spending openly at public-houses stolen farthings was more extraordinary still. So the responsibility for his conviction rests largely with himself.

But fourteen years even for a fool is unthinkable, and the responsibility for that rests with his judge.

This leads me to say that stupid and half-witted criminals are often more severely dealt with than clever and dangerous rogues. The former "give themselves away" in such sweetly simple fashion that they appear hardened and indifferent, and are punished accordingly. I am afraid, too, that sometimes judges and magistrates cannot attain to Pauline excellence and "suffer fools gladly." Hundreds of times I have heard the expression about someone who had received a severe sentence : "Well, he deserved it for being such a fool !" Even the public is more prepared to tolerate severe punishments for the men whose crimes savour of crass folly, if not of downright idiocy, than it is for dangerous, clever daring, and calculating rogues. My second example will tend to show that magistrates are not exempt from this kind of feeling, but when led by it, rush to the other extreme, and inflict no punishment whatever. The hearing of the case

I am about to relate took place at Tower Bridge Police-Court in July, 1908.

A young married woman was charged with obtaining by false pretences £75 in cash and £15 worth of jewellery from an old woman who had been a domestic servant, but who at the age of seventy had given up regular work, and was hoping to make her little savings suffice for the remainder of her days. The prisoner was also charged with obtaining by fraud £10 5s. from a working man in whose house she had lodgings.

Evidence was given that the prisoner had an uncle abroad, but nothing had been heard of him for a very long time. Two years ago the prisoner spread a report that he had died immensely rich, and had left her thousands of pounds. In order to pay legal expenses, she said, she borrowed money from her aunt, an old woman of eighty. Having exhausted her aunt's money, and leaving her to the workhouse authorities, the prisoner then proceeded to draw upon the retired domestic, who parted with every penny of her savings and her jewellery.

In due time she was penniless also, and had again to seek work, at seventy years of age, having no friends to help her. The prisoner then turned her attention to her landlord, and obtained £10 5s. from him ; but he became suspicious, and wanted to see some documents or solicitors. She gave him the address of her solicitors in Chancery Lane. Then he insisted upon her accompanying him to see them ; he compelled her to go, and, on arriving, found the address to be a bank. The landlord then communicated with the police, and

she was arrested. The prisoner admitted that the whole story was false, and that she was very wicked. It was stated in evidence that the prisoner had an illegitimate child, which she said was the child of a gentleman, and that she had persuaded a young man to marry her by promising him £300 from the child's father, when the wedding took place ; but the young husband had never received the money.

The lady missionary told the magistrate that she had received a letter from the prisoner, whilst under remand in Holloway Prison, expressing her deep sorrow, and promising to work hard and pay the money back.

Mr. Hutton bound the prisoner over under the Probation Act ! I wonder what was at the back of Mr. Hutton's mind when he practically discharged her.

If the Probation Act is to bring us such judgments as this, it would have been well if we had never heard of it.

I can imagine no more heartless and cruel series of frauds than those perpetrated in this case.

The prisoner seems to have pursued her victims with unerring instinct and skill : the old aunt was robbed and ruined ; the old domestic, after a long life of hard work and economy, was robbed and ruined ; then, with confidence in her own powers, she proceeded to rob her landlord. A continual succession of lies, deceptions, and frauds, extending over years ! And then bound over ! Herein is a problem : If ten teaspoons, one metal chain, and one gold locket are equal to fourteen years' penal servitude, what are some

hundreds of pounds, obtained by two years' fraud, and entailing the ruin of two decent old women, equal to ?

The answer, according to the magistrate, is, Nothing ! A great deal has been said, and not without some show of justice, about there being one law for the rich and another for the poor. In this case it is positively true, though in an opposite sense to the generally accepted meaning of the words.

I have no hesitation in saying that if the prosecutors had been in more influential circumstances, and had employed a solicitor to put their case, the law would not have been satisfied by accepting the prisoner's recognizances. Are we to accept the principle that punishment must be in inverse ratio to the seriousness of the offence ? It appears so !

The innocent young man she decoyed into marriage has not received his £300—he never will—but he received what he might have expected, and at least he got his deserts.

I ask my readers to ponder this decision : Bound over ! I ask them to ponder this sentence : Fourteen years' penal servitude ! There is an eternity between the two sentences ; the one is permitted to go on her guileless way. The other is sent to confinement, monotony, and degradation for fourteen years. The latter was at the worst a foolish, clumsy rogue ; the other was a consummate and accomplished artist in deception.

Whether the old women would have received any benefit from the imprisonment of the younger woman is beside the question. I am sure they will

receive no benefit from her liberty, though she says she will work hard and repay them !

On what principle can she be called a first offender ? If rogues are to be imprisoned at all, by what process of reasoning can it be argued that she ought to go free ?

Surely the time is come when other people as well as prisoners must be considered. What will be the effect of a judgment like this ? It can have but one effect : it will encourage similar young women in their lives of deception and fraud.

I may here stop to ask whether a young *man* charged with similar offence would have been dealt with at Tower Bridge Police-Court, or at any other court, in a similar way. My own conviction is that he would not have been so dealt with.

This raises the question whether there is or ought to be equality, or something approximating to equality, of punishment for the sexes.

This being the day of women's rights, I would say that certainly there ought to be something like equality even in the imposition of sentences ; but the law and its administrators do not hold this view. I do not remember any case of a man and woman being jointly charged, both being jointly and equally guilty, in which the man did not receive much the heavier sentence.

I can understand it in the case of husband and wife, for the law considers husband and wife as one ; but, unfortunately for the husband, it considers the male person as that particular one. But, with regard to unmarried couples, I can see no general reason for severity to the man and leniency to the woman.

At the risk of appearing ferocious, I must say that I was taken aback at the Tower Bridge Police-Court decision, for I confess that I would have preferred the magistrate giving the prisoner six months' hard labour, or sending her for trial before judge and jury. Not that I want either men or women to be detained in prison—I hate the thought of it—but I happen to hate something else much more, and that is the idea that plausible and crafty young women can rob and ruin decent old women with impunity.

I hold—though in this I may be wrong—that if the law cannot compel fraudulent persons to restore their ill-gotten gains—and in the case of the prisoner at Tower Bridge this was, of course, impossible—then at least it ought to administer in such cases a decent amount of punishment. But the course adopted did not uphold the dignity of the law ; it did not in the least help those that have suffered ; it did not punish the prisoner ; neither did it serve to act as a warning to others. But while, as I have previously said, justice is, on the whole, fairly administered, there is still a wide difference in the sentences given for like offences. The demeanour of a prisoner before the magistrate may easily add to or lessen the length of his sentence ; crocodile tears and a whining appeal for mercy generally have an opposite effect to that the prisoner wishes.

A scornful, defiant, or violent attitude is almost certain to increase the length of sentence. The plausible, cunning, and somewhat clever man, who cross-examines with the skill of an expert, is sure to be hardly judged and appraised when sentence

is given ; but the devil-may-care fellow, who bears himself a bit jauntily, and who, moreover, has considerable humour and a dash of wit, is almost sure by a few witty or humorous quips to partially disarm justice and secure for himself more lenient punishment. I suppose we all have a sneaking kindness for the complete vagabond ; we instinctively like the fellow who can make us laugh ; we do not want to believe that the man who is possessed of humour is altogether bad, and when we have to punish him we let him off as lightly as possible. But the stubborn thick-head does not excite either our risible faculties or our heart's sympathy ; nevertheless, that thick-head may be far less guilty than the complete vagabond—in truth, he is often a far better fellow—but his thick-headedness is against him, and we punish him accordingly. And here I draw upon my own experiences, for I have known complete vagabonds that were also absolute scoundrels, who, by their apparent candour, jollity, and flashes of humour, continually saved themselves from anything approaching long sentences.

One fellow in particular took at least twelve years in qualifying for penal servitude, though he was a thorough rogue and a vagabond absolutely. He was a printer and a clever workman ; but he never worked—not he ! He would steal anything. Several times he had called on clergymen, and while conversing with them in their halls had appropriated their best silk umbrellas. On one occasion he had gone away without booty, but he returned five minutes afterwards, and rang the bell, which, being answered by the servant, he

said : " I am very sorry to trouble, but I forgot my umbrella. Ah ! here it is." And he went away with the parson's best.

" Give me another chance," I have heard him say. " You know you like me : I am not a bad fellow at heart." He saved himself from penal servitude many times, but he got it at last, after several narrow escapes.

One winter night I was told he was at my front-door, where he had been many times, for I never asked him in : I am sure he would have robbed me if I had. " Well, old man, how are you ?" he said, for he always patronized me in a delightful manner. " Oh, it is you, Downy, is it ?" " Ah, it is me. I say, Holmes, I am starving !" " There is some comfort in that," I said. " Bah ! you don't mean it ; you are too good-hearted. Give us a cup of tea." I declined his invitation, and told him that I had no umbrellas to spare. " Well, that's a bit thick," he said ; " I did not expect that from you. Well, I'm off." Then, as an afterthought, he said : " What's the time ?" " Five minutes past six," I said. " Why, I have been on this doorstep quite five minutes." " Quite ten minutes," I said.

Away he went to the parish clergyman, who did not know him, and delivered some imaginary messages from myself. He got two shillings and a meal from the clergyman.

To my surprise, I saw him in the dock next day, charged with stealing a valuable fur-lined overcoat. He had called at a gentleman's house to ask for employment. The servant had admitted him, and left him standing in the hall while she summoned the master. It was dark, but he dis-

covered the valuable coat and put it on. There was no work for him, and the gentleman, who knew Downy well, showed him out promptly. He afterwards missed his coat, and quickly gave information to the police. Downy was as light-hearted as usual, denied his guilt, and closely examined the prosecutor as to the exact time he (Downy) called on him. The magistrate, having had depositions taken, was about to commit him for trial, when the prisoner said : "I have a witness to call." "You can call him at your trial," the magistrate said. "Who is your witness?" "Mr. Holmes." "What can he prove?" "That I was at his house at exactly the same time that it is said I was at the prosecutor's." I declined to give evidence, for I believed the fellow had the overcoat, though he was without a coat when I saw him. He was duly committed for trial, but before leaving the dock he turned to the magistrate and said : "You have made up your mind that I am to get five years, but you are mistaken this time : no jury will convict on the evidence." The grand jury threw out the bill, so I was saved the pleasure of giving evidence for him. In a few days he appeared at the court desiring to speak to the magistrate. When given the chance, he said : "Well, I'm here again. I thought you might be pleased to know that no true bill was found against me ; my case did not go to the jury. You haven't done with me yet." "I am sorry," said the magistrate. "But you will not be disappointed many more times. You will get your five years." "Probably, but not at your suggestion. Good-morning!"

He was on my doorstep again that evening. "Come to see you again, Holmes, my boy. Lend us half a crown!" I declined. "Ha!" he said, "you would lend it me soon enough if you knew what a lark I have had. I can't help laughing. Why, I have been to old — and offered to give him back his fur coat for a quid." And the rascal roared at the thought of it. "What did he say to you?" "Well, he rather hurt my feelings, for his language was not polite." "I suppose you have not restored it?" "What do you think?"

But Downy got his five years within a few weeks. He removed a big marble clock from the bar of a public-house, and got away with it, too, in broad daylight; but Fate tripped him at last, and he got his well-earned five years. As he is still under forty years of age, I have no doubt but that in prison his talent will be developed. Not that he has much to learn, but even Downy may gather a few wrinkles when given proper opportunities.

Now, Downy represents a very numerous class of men and women, though few of them have his cool assurance and originality, but, like him, live to a large extent by thieving and general dishonesty. These people can seldom furnish *bona-fide* addresses, or give any proof that they have been doing honest work. Yet they go on from year to year, in and out of prison, undergoing small sentences—first a few days, then a few weeks, followed by a few months, then committal to trial, when sentences of one or two years are passed upon them. Some of them, though their lives are devoted to criminality, never arrive at the dignity of penal servitude.

With due respect, there is, I submit, even now room for improvement with regard to the infliction of sentences. A large amount of latitude must be allowed, for judges and magistrates ought not, must not, be automatic ; a certain amount of liberty must be granted to them. But when that latitude includes the right and the power to give fourteen years' penal servitude to a young man of twenty-two for a trumpery offence, and that his first offence ; when it includes the right and the power to practically discharge a clever and dangerous woman who has lived by fraud, and whose frauds brought untold suffering upon innocent and aged victims—when this latitude allows cool and calculating rogues to continue interminably their lives of roguery, alternated with very small and insufficient sentences, it is evident that the liberty and latitude allowed require in some way to be circumscribed.

Judges and magistrates are human, and I for one would keep them human, with the power to sympathize and the power to laugh, for these things are altogether good, and to a reasonable extent it is right that these wholesome qualities should exercise some influence ; but even these faculties require some restraint, or injustice instead of justice will be done. I am afraid there is some truth in what many discharged prisoners have told me—that the length of sentence depends on the whim of the judge, and that on some days it appears evident that a crumb of undigested cheese impairs the temper and judgment, and adds appreciably to the length of the sentences given.

If this is in the least degree true, it is a matter

for profound regret. In spite of temper, pain, or indigestion, the balance of justice ought to be fairly held. I am glad to think that I have sometimes known pain and suffering to have the opposite effect when judgment has been given. A magistrate of my acquaintance, noted for good temper and courteous urbanity, was one morning in a very unpleasant frame of mind. Everything went wrong with him, and, as a consequence, with everyone who had to deal with him. He was cross, peevish, and rude. The police knew it, for he was not civil to them ; witnesses knew it, for he was rough with them. On one occasion when he had been at his worst he caught my eye. After the court was over he said to me : “ You thought me very ill-tempered this morning ? ” “ Indeed I did, your Worship, for you were rough to everyone.” “ Ah ! ” he said, “ I have neuralgia frightfully ; I have had no sleep all night.” I said : “ I am very sorry, your Worship ; but I noticed another thing.” “ What was that ? ” “ Why, you let all the prisoners down lightly.” “ Oh,” he said, “ you noticed it, did you ? I had to let myself go sometimes, for I could hardly bear it, so I let go when it did not matter very much ; but I kept a tight hand over myself when it came to sentences. I was determined that the prisoners should not suffer for my neuralgia.”

He was wise, and he did nobly. It would be well if all our judges and magistrates kept a tight hand on themselves when it comes to sentences ; for everyone must admit a cruel wrong is done when prisoners are awarded heavier sentences because the judge is either in ill-health or out of temper.

CHAPTER VI

DISCHARGED PRISONERS

IT was, of course, inevitable, considering the large space prison reform and discharged prisoners have occupied in the public mind, that some influence, not altogether healthy, would be exercised on both prisoners and public. The leniency of sentences, or of treatment whilst undergoing sentences, has upon most prisoners a humanizing and softening effect. On others it produces a very different feeling, for in a measure it confirms them in wrong-doing. Personally, I have great faith in wise and discriminate leniency, preferring the risk of confirming the few to the certainty of hardening the many. Still, it is worth while, in our efforts for prison reform and for ex-prisoners' social salvation, to pause sometimes and inquire not only what success is being achieved, but also what is the general effect of our efforts. The constant stream of appeals on behalf of discharged prisoners that flows throughout the length and breadth of our land, while productive of good, is of a certainty productive of much evil. The efforts made in prison to get prisoners to attach themselves to some recognized Prisoners' Aid Society before

discharge, good as they are, are not without some ill consequences. The sympathy of the community for men and women who have broken their country's laws, and who are undergoing, or have undergone, terms of imprisonment, has been so often and so earnestly proclaimed that even this expression of sympathy has had consequences that were not anticipated, but which might have been expected if a little more thought had been given to the matter. It is, I know, impossible that any movement or trend of thought can be absolutely free from evil, and every influence for good has something connected with it that acts in an opposite direction. One result of all this public sympathy and effort has been to lead a large number of people to think and believe that because they have been criminals, and have suffered just punishment for their evil-doing, it is someone's bounden duty to help them, and provide them not only with the means of living when discharged from prison, but also with suitable employment.

So far has this kind of belief permeated, that several of my acquaintances, educated men who have suffered well-merited terms of imprisonment, contend that the community ought to receive them back with open arms, and not only restore them to a position, but give them again the confidence and respect they had forfeited. Their offences having been purged, they argue, by the term of imprisonment suffered, the law has been satisfied ; and the law now holding them guiltless, nothing else ought to be considered. These men, as I have said, were educated men, and well able to win

back the public confidence if they set themselves to the task. But I am more concerned for the effect of this belief upon the ordinary prisoners, who have but little education, and for them it has disastrous effects. If there is one virtue that is absolutely necessary to a discharged prisoner, it is the virtue of self-reliance. Without it he is nothing. No matter what sympathy and what aid be extended to him from societies or individuals, without self-reliance he is a certain failure. Anything that tends to lessen self-reliance in discharged prisoners has, then, a tendency to reduce their chances of reformation. After all has been done that can possibly be done for discharged prisoners, one is compelled—reluctantly compelled—to the conclusion that the only men who can be rescued are those who possess grit and self-reliance. Many—I think that I can with safety say most—discharged prisoners appear to believe that assistance once given gives them a claim to other assistance. I have met with very few to whom I have given material help who thought that the help given them was exceptional and given with the view of helping them to a little start, that they might afterwards rely upon themselves. On the other hand, I have met with hundreds who actually believed that help previously given constituted an absolute claim to continued assistance. Sometimes it has taken much persuasion, and occasionally a display of physical force, before I have been able to get some discharged prisoners to accept my view of the matter.

The complete assurance with which many of

them present themselves at my door and inform me that they are "Just come out of prison, sir," is of itself astounding, but a little conversation with them reveals more surprising things still. About eleven o'clock one winter night there was a loud rap at my front-door, to which I responded. When I opened the door, a big man stood before me, and he promptly put his foot across the doorstep, and the following conversation took place : "What do you want?" "Oh, you are Mr. Holmes. I want you to help me." "Why should I help you? I know nothing of you." "I have just come out of prison." "Well, you are none the better for that." "Well, you help men that have been in prison." "Sometimes, when I see they are ashamed of having been in." "Well, I don't want to get in prison again." "How do I know you have been in prison?" "Why, didn't you speak to us like a man last Sunday?" "Yes, I was at Pentonville last Sunday, and I hope I spoke like a man." "Ah, that you did! And when I heard you, I said : 'I'll see him when I come out. He will be sure to give me half a dollar.'" "How did you get my address?" "From another chap." "When did you come out?" "This morning." "How long have you been in?" "Six months." "Got all your conduct marks?" "Every one." "Then you had eight shillings when you left the prison. How much have you got left?" "Never a sou!" "What have you done with it?" "I bought a collar, a pocket-handkerchief, a necktie, and a bit of tobacco, and a good dinner." "You saved nothing for your lodging?" "No; I thought

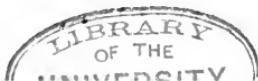
you would see me right." "I see ! How old are you ?" "Thirty-four." "How tall ?" "Six feet one." "What is your weight ?" "Fourteen stone." "My friend, you are big enough, strong enough, and young enough to help yourself. You seem to be making a bad job of it ; but you will get no help from me." "Not half a dollar ?" "Not half a penny." "What are you for ?" "Well," I said, "I appear to exist for a good many purposes, but at the present time I am for the purpose of telling you to move off. Take your foot from my doorstep and clear !" "Not without half a dollar." "Take your foot away !" "No fear ! I am going to have some money for my lodgings." "You will get no money here. Clear off !" "You don't mean to say that, after speaking to us like a man, you won't give me any money ?" "That is exactly what I do mean to say." "What are you for ?" "I will show you what I am for "; and I called three stalwart sons. "I ask you once more to withdraw your foot, or we shall be compelled to put you as gently as possible in the gutter." He then left us, muttering as he went : "I wonder what he's for ?"

The sight of an ashamed and broken ex-prisoner touches me, and my heart goes out to him. Neither sympathy nor help will I deny him. But when unabashed fellows confront me, and show not the slightest evidence of sorrow or shame, but trade, as far as they can trade, upon the shameful fact that they have been rogues and vagabonds, very different feelings are evoked. My experience leads me to the belief that the

greater majority of ex-prisoners are by no means ashamed of having been in prison, or of the criminal actions that preceded prison ; neither are they anywise reticent about their actions or thoughts.

So well is the public desire to help prisoners understood that I have sometimes been the victim of specious scoundrels who probably had never been in prison, but who richly deserved the unenviable distinction.

One morning, when I was leaving home for the day, I saw on the opposite side of the street a young man, who looked intently at me when I bade my wife good-bye. As he was an entire stranger to me, I did not speak to him, but went about my business. During the evening my wife said to me : "Oh, you owe me ten shillings!" "What for ?" I inquired. "I gave young Brown his fare to Birmingham." "What young Brown ?" I inquired. "That nice young fellow that got into trouble two years ago, and you helped him when he came out of prison. He kept the place you got for him, and now he has got a much better one at Birmingham." I tried to recall young Brown, but my memory was vacant on the matter. At length I asked for his description, when the young man I had seen in the morning was revealed. He noted my departure, and when quite sure that I was not in the way, he came to the door and asked to see me. He told my wife a long tale about his imprisonment and of my kindness to him, of his struggle for two years on a small salary, and of the good position open for him in Birmingham ;



and also of his certainty that I would, had I been at home, have advanced his fare, and wound up by expressing the great sorrow that he had missed me. He did wish so much to tell me of his success, for it was all due to my kindness. He got his fare, and I sincerely hope that by this time he has got his deserts too.

But, independently of specious rogues, it is high time the fact was recognized that a feeling does largely exist among prisoners and ex-prisoners that the fact of having been in prison is a sure passport to public sympathy, and constitutes a claim upon public assistance. A large proportion of prisoners are, of course, people of low intelligence, who cannot estimate things at a proper value or see things as ordinary-minded people see them, and to these the belief becomes a certainty and the hope almost a realization. Let me repeat, then, that the duty of the community to help and "rescue" discharged prisoners has been so insistently and persistently proclaimed that prisoners now quite believe it, and are eagerly ready to leave to societies, organizations, or individuals other than themselves those efforts that are undoubtedly necessary for their own reformation and re-establishment.

I hold, and very strongly hold, that there is no hope of any prisoner's reformation who has no sorrow for the wrong he has done, and no sense of shame for the disgrace he has brought upon himself and others. I am not sure which is the more hopeless and repulsive kind of an individual—the man who blatantly demands assistance because he has been a rogue, or the fawning hypocrite who

professes repentance, tells of his conversion, and thanks God that he has been in prison ; but I do know that both have the same object in view, and that both are but specimens of a numerous class.

While giving a course of lectures in our large prisons I had opportunities of becoming acquainted with many of the prisoners. At the conclusion of each lecture those prisoners who had expressed during the week a wish to consult me were allowed to do so in strict privacy. I had some very interesting talks with them. For many of them I felt profoundly sorry, and made some arrangement to meet with them when they were once more at liberty. For others I felt no pity, for I realized that they were barely receiving a just reward for their deeds.

One young man, with a heavy face and a leering kind of a look, came to me, and informed me that he had asked permission to see me, because he wanted my help in a fortnight's time, when he would be at liberty. Clad in khaki and marked with broad arrows, there was nothing to differentiate him from the ordinary prisoner, excepting, perhaps, that his face was duller and less intelligent than the majority. I asked him how long he had been in prison. "Six months." "What are you in for?" "Forgery." "How much money did you get by it?" "Five hundred pounds." "You were a bank clerk, then?" "Yes." "Is your father alive?" "No." "Have you a mother?" "Yes, and two sisters." "In what way do you want me to help you?" "I want to go to Canada." I looked at him closely and said, "Tell me what you did with the five hundred pounds." For

the first time I saw brightness in his eyes and face, and he promptly replied, "Oh, I had a high old time." I saw sensual enjoyment written very largely about his lips and eyes ; but I repeated his words, "A high old time ?" "Yes ; a good time, you know." So I enumerated drink, gambling, women, and to each of them he replied, "Yes." He evidently looked back to that wicked period with great pleasure. I felt that he was far beyond my prentice hand, for I thought of his mother and sisters, of the employer he had so ruthlessly robbed, and of his own certain future. So I said to him, "My son, I cannot help you ; no one can help you. It is no use wasting money in sending you to Canada. Canada is no place for you, for you cannot get away from yourself." He said, "I shall be away from temptation in Canada." "No," I said ; "that is impossible : the devil is always to hand, even in Canada." "Won't you help me to get away from London ?" "No," I said. "Stop in London, where you have been a wicked rogue ; face life where you are known ; show yourself a man by living decently and working honestly at anything you can get. Try and win back your mother's and sisters' respect. Write to your employer and ask his forgiveness ; tell him that at some time in life you will endeavour to repay him. Feel ashamed that you have been a disgusting rogue ; don't rejoice in having a 'high old time.' " He did not blush, or appear in any way concerned, but said : "If you won't help me, others will." It needs no great knowledge of life to forecast that young man's future. I often feel dismayed when I consider

some of the present-day tendencies. There is such a feverish and manifest desire among thousands of people to stand between a prisoner and the law, and to relieve him at any cost from the legal consequence of his wrong-doing.

Indeed, some folk would move heaven and earth, if it were possible, to keep a heartless young rogue out of prison. I would not lift my finger ; to me it seems a most serious matter, for the consequences of criminal actions ought to be certain as daylight. I would, however, do much to make those consequences, not only certain, but swift, reasonable, and dignified, but not vindictive or revengeful. Punishment should be severe enough to convey an important and a lasting lesson. There ought to be no element of chance about it, but at present there is a great deal of uncertainty whether a prisoner, even if found guilty, will receive any punishment or be merely admonished.

I am aware that the views I have just expressed are not held by many people, but I am speaking from a long experience, during which I have dealt personally with individuals, and have taken infinite pains to learn something of those individuals. From this knowledge and experience I am forced to the conclusion that, as a rule, it is not a wise or a good thing to prevent the consequence of crime falling upon the criminal ; but, as I have previously said, those consequences ought to be reasonable and sensible. We need a healthier public feeling on this question, and I earnestly long for the time when we shall all feel and acknowledge that the real disgrace lies in the action, and not in the degree of punishment awarded the perpetrator.

A thief discharged on "probation" is still a thief equally with the one who had received a term of imprisonment, but the community thinks otherwise. I am quite sure that I shall be hardly judged and condemned for giving expression to this opinion ; it will doubtless be said that I have grown hard-hearted late in life, and have lost my sympathy for unfortunate people. I ask my readers to accept my assurance that this is not the case ; my sympathy is larger than ever, for poor broken humanity is with me an ever-present sorrow. I never refuse assistance to a hard-up scoundrel without a heart-wrench and subsequent feelings of uneasiness. I love men, but I hate the very thought of "coddling" humanity. I know what it leads to, and I think how poor broken humanity catches on to the process, and becomes more and more willing to be "coddled." But poor humanity is the poorer for the process.

A man that has committed some crime, and has then taken his gruel in both senses, who faces the world, and by pluck, perseverance, and rectitude regains his footing in life, is to me a hero ; for I can appreciate his difficulties, and appreciate, too, his moral worth. It is my privilege to know such men, and it is my joy sometimes to meet them. When I pass one of them in the street, I always feel inclined to cry, "There goes a man." Thank God, men of this sort are more numerous than might be expected, and it is only fair to our prison authorities to say that among a number that I know none complain of their treatment. Whilst undergoing sentence they did not like prison, of course, but they had to put up with it, and made

the best of it. But while I am writing this—on July 16, between 9 and 10 p.m.—I have been called three times to speak to young men who claimed—and I have no doubt in their cases truly claimed—to be discharged prisoners. Each time it was a young man under thirty that required help ; two were absolute strangers to me ; one I had known previously, for, unfortunately, six years ago I met him before he was consigned to prison, and also after he came out. At that time I did my best for him, and gave him a suit of clothes, and procured him, after great difficulties, some employment. During the last year he had called on me several times, when I had resolutely declined to assist him. He seemed astonished, and said, “But you helped me before.” To-night I was a bit angry, and said, “Oh, is it you again ? You are troubling me too often ; I can do nothing for you.” He resented the idea that he was a too frequent visitor. “Why, it is six weeks since I was here.” My next visitor was a strong, healthy young man, who promptly touched his forehead with his fingers by way of salute. “Just come out of prison, sir.” “Well, what of that ?” “I am a married man, with two children.” “I am sorry for your wife and children.” He misunderstood me. “I thought you would be. We must pay our rent to-night, or we shall be put out in the street.” “Where are you living ?” “In Campbell Road, Finsbury Park. We have furnished apartments ; we have been there one week, and they want the rent.” I said, “You came out of prison a week ago, and paid a deposit on your room ?” “Yes, sir.” “You pay, or should pay,

seven shillings a week for that wretched room. You have not paid, so you ask me to help you ; but I cannot do it : I know nothing whatever of you. Please go away : I am busy." He looked at me and said : " But I stole boots, you know, and I got three months. What are my wife and children to do ?" " Well," I said, " if you did steal boots, you were a thief, and I cannot think the better of you on that account. You may or may not have a wife and two children ; I do not know. Furnished apartments in Campbell Road are too dear and too nasty. I cannot give away money to keep the landlord of Campbell Road." With great difficulty I got rid of him, and I am afraid that my temper was not sweetened in the endeavour.

I had just settled down at my work when once more I was informed that a man wished to see me. The inevitable front-door again. I sometimes wonder how many silent vows I have registered on my own doorstep. The broken ones, I know, have been numerous enough to condemn me.

Another old acquaintance this time. As I stand on the doorstep, the rain sweeps in at the open door. The poor fellow is soaked through ; it is nearly ten o'clock ; he is homeless and penniless. I can spare half a crown ; he has it, and I direct him to the nearest lodging-house—not that he needed directions—feeling quite sure that he will there meet with my two previous visitors ; possibly, too, will tell them of his success, and chaff them about their failure. But it was the rain that did it, and I hope that fact may be taken into consideration when judgment is delivered.

True, by their continual coming they had wearied me, and by their persistence they had annoyed me ; but the sight of a homeless vagabond in the pelting rain acted as a counter-irritant, and pity had to triumph over censorious judgment. So I went back to my desk knowing that I had done wrong ; but somehow I had received satisfaction, for my temper was soothed. Perhaps it was good for me that I was not visited again that night by any discharged prisoners. For, poor fellows ! they demand our pity ; but how to transmute that pity into practical help is a difficult problem.

When a discharged prisoner possesses health, skill, and self-reliance, he has a hard battle to fight, one that will call forth either the best or the worst that is in him. But the great bulk of discharged prisoners have but indifferent health, and possess no technical skill or self-reliance ; any service they can render to the community is but poor service, and of a kind that many thousands of honest men are only too anxious to secure for themselves. If the great bulk of them could, when discharged, be put into regular employment, and be enabled to earn a living, they would, if under a mild compulsion, conduct themselves decently ; but if work and reasonable payment were provided, compulsion would still be necessary, for the greater part of them have no continuity of purpose, and are as thoughtless of to-morrow as butterflies, and they would very soon, were it possible, revert to an aimless, wandering life. It is the lack of grit, of continuity of purpose, of moral principles, combined with inferior physical health and a low standard of intelligence, that renders the position

of many discharged prisoners so hopeless. We may blame them—perhaps it is right to blame them—for not exercising qualities they do not possess, but it is certain they do not possess the qualities I have named. They do, however, possess qualities that are not quite so estimable, for irresponsibility and low cunning are their chief characteristics. These men are nomads : settled life, regular work, the patient bearing of life's burden, and the facing of life's difficulties, are foreign to their instincts and nature. This kind of character is developed at an early age, for it is very prevalent in our growing youths ; it is one of the signs of our times, and it bodes no good to our future national welfare.

After giving the last of a course of weekly lectures to youths under twenty-one in one of our provincial prisons, I spoke a few friendly words to them, and asked those to put up their hands who had been previously in prison. A number of hands were put up. On questioning them, I found that they by no means resented short terms of imprisonment alternated with irresponsible liberty.

During the present summer, when commencing a similar course of lectures in one of our large London prisons, I asked the youthful prisoners who had previously met me to put up their hands. Here again a number of hands went up I found, to my astonishment, at least six youths who had listened to my lectures in other prisons were detained in this particular prison. I could not help telling them that I thought my lectures had not done them much good. “ We liked them, sir,”

was the response. "Well," I said, "I wish those addresses had been a great deal better or a great deal worse ; they were not good enough to keep you out of prison, neither were they bad enough to frighten you away."

What place is there in strenuous life for such young fellows ? The difficulties outside a prison's wall are so great that they cannot face them. But the saddest part of it is that they do not want to face them, and it must be confessed that they have not the slightest idea how to do so.

Weakness, then, not wickedness, is the great characteristic of what are termed "the criminal classes." Who can rescue them ? Who can reform them ? No one, unless they can infuse into their very bones, blood, and marrow the essence of vigour and the germ of self-reliance. Prisoners' Aid Societies are powerless with them. Church Army and Salvation Army and all the Labour Homes combined can do nothing with them or for them ; for prison life is easier than wood-chopping, and the comforts of prison are superior to those of a Labour Home. The Borstal system is good, so far as it goes, but it does not go half far enough ; it is not vigorous enough. Possibly, if these young men were detained three times as long as they are at present, and given three times the amount of work they have to do at the present time, with the rough up-to-date technical training, many of them would profit ; but I am certain that no half-measures can be effectual with the large army of young prisoners who have either acquired or inherited the love of an idle and irresponsible life.

I was speaking a short time ago to a young man whom I knew had been several times in prison, and asked him : " What are you in for this time ? " " For making a false attestation," was his reply. He had tried to enlist under false pretences. But he is now in the army, for I have received letters from him. Three other young fellows whom I had met in prison when at liberty consulted me about joining the army. I warned them of the risk, and told them they would have to tell lies. Nevertheless, they are now in the army. Why there should be any difficulty about such fellows joining the army I don't understand. They are animals, and they can fight ! If their teeth are not good, what does it matter ? They are not now required to bite cartridges. They can be taught to discharge rifles, and a bullet from one of their rifles may prove as deadly as a bullet from the rifle of a better man. " The character of the army must be maintained." By all means keep up the character of the army. Some people are advocating conscription. Well, here is a chance. Form a regiment, or two regiments, of young men who have been three times in prison. Give them ten years of thorough discipline and sound manual and technical training. Under discipline they will be obedient, and at the worst they will be as good men as those that manned Nelson's ships, and would prove quite as good as those that fought at Waterloo, or captured India for the East India Company.

I am no advocate of war, but I am afraid that the prospect of universal peace is remote. Devoutly I wish that it was close at hand. We must

look at things as they are. Let me state the case : Here are thousands of young men who have no settled places of abode, no technical skill, no great physical strength, no capabilities, and no desire for continuous honest labour. No one can provide them with employment. There is no place for them in industrial life. They are content to spend their lives in cheap lodging-houses or in prison. They beg or they steal when at liberty. Occasionally they do a little work, when that work does not require much strength or brains. They graduate in idleness and crime ; they become habituated to prison, and finally they become hopeless criminals. Large sums of money are expended in a vain endeavour to reform them ; larger sums still are expended in maintaining public institutions that we call prisons, in which they are kept for a short period, and in which they are submitted to lives of semi-idleness. Large numbers of warders are maintained to look after them when in prison ; large numbers of police are required to look after them when they are at liberty. Innocent people suffer through their depredations ; innocent people, honest and hard-working people, have to keep them when they are submitted to the comparatively comfortable life of prison. They become fathers of children, and future generations will be compelled to bear heavy burdens because of them.

Many of them, when young, join local regiments of militia. Once a year they are called up for training, but their few weeks of training soon pass, after which they hark back to lodging-houses or prisons.

They get some liking for a soldier's life ; but if they have been in prison, there is no honest place for them in the army. They are not good enough to be shot at ! they are not good enough to shoot at others ! It would appear that a large amount of moral excellence is required before a man can be allowed to be the recipient of a bullet, or before he can receive a State licence to kill.

I am persuaded that nothing but a long period of strict discipline will avail the mass of young men who constantly find their way into prison. At present prison discipline is too short to be effectual, too deadening to be useful, too monotonous to be elevating. Compulsory discipline, with a fair degree of liberty, a reasonable remuneration for their services, and a lengthened training, are the only things that are at all likely to be effectual with young men who will not, cannot, submit themselves to the higher discipline that is self-imposed.

Failing the army, there is but one alternative—national workshops, with manual and technical training. But that means socialism pure and simple ; for if workshops were provided for young criminals, there could be no possible objection against a similar provision for the children of the industrious poor.

The State needs to be careful not to hold out any inducements to youthful criminality, for of a surety it will be a bad day for England when idle and dishonest youth stands a better chance in life than youth that is industrious and honest. Even now certain signs point to danger in that direction.

Prisoners' Aid Societies have an impossible task when they attempt to reform these young men. They are heavily handicapped from the start, inasmuch as they cannot enforce discipline even in a Labour Home ; neither can they compel continuity of work ; neither can they secure regular employment for any that might be inclined to perseverance and industry. No Prisoners' Aid Society can do this, and it would be well for everybody concerned if this fact were honestly admitted and the truth fairly faced. In justice to many of the societies, it is only fair to say that they freely admit that they have nothing to offer to those that have been several times convicted.

During 1906, 10,700 men and women, each of whom had already been in prison more than twenty times, were again received into the local prisons of England and Wales.

Think of it. In one year only, and that the very last year for which criminal statistics are available, 10,700 men and women who had been committed to prison more than twenty times each were again sent to prison in England and Wales alone !

These official figures not only bring a grave indictment against our prison system, but they also serve to show the inability of Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies to deal with the bulk of discharged prisoners in ways that can be called satisfactory. The fault does not lie with the societies, for they are all animated with an earnest desire to help discharged prisoners. Every society that exists, and every individual member of every society, would be more than delighted—

they would be thankful to God—if they could in some effectual way help every discharged prisoner. But they cannot. The difficulties are too great, too stupendous. Of a truth, they have no work to offer discharged prisoners; for they cannot create work at will, neither can they produce from some mysterious and inexhaustible store situations to suit the varying capabilities of ex-prisoners.

Social conditions are dead against the work of these societies, though the sympathy—that is, the abstract sympathy—of the public is with them. For every situation that is vacant, or likely to be vacant, where skill and experience are not required, a hundred honest men are waiting—waiting to fight each other for a remote chance of getting it. Employers will not hold situations in abeyance till some Prisoners' Aid Society can supply them with a doubtful servant. They would act foolishly—I might say wickedly—if they did. Again I say—for I would have this fact emphasized—no organization, be it large or small, can offer situations to discharged prisoners. Certain things they can do. But what avails intermittent wood-chopping? Of what use is casual bill-distributing? Can an irregular supply of envelope-addressing, continued for a few weeks, be considered work? Paper and rag sorting, and the carrying of advertising boards at intervals, must not be dignified by the word "work." All these things are useful to a limited extent and to a certain class. They suit those men, and those men only, who have no desire for the discipline of real work, by which I mean regular and con-

tinuous labour. Any discharged prisoner who possesses a fair amount of health and strength and an atom of grit stands a much better chance when he relies upon himself than when he seeks the aid of an organization ; for life in a Labour Home does not procure him, or help him to procure, honest and continuous work. Even a lengthened stay in a Labour Home leaves him in the same position as when he left prison. Relying on himself, an ex-prisoner can take his chance among the hundred who are scrambling or fighting for the coveted job ; and if his health and appearance are satisfactory, he is as likely to get it as any other man. But even though a large number of discharged prisoners enter Labour Homes, the managers have no power to compel them either to work or remain in the home. As a consequence, the majority depart in a very short time, preferring liberty and semi-starvation to the non-compulsory restraint of the home. So they pass into freedom, glorious freedom ! Free, but with no desire, and with very little chance, of doing right; free, with little desire and no ability to live by honest labour. Freedom to them means liberty or licence to do wrong, and only serves to give them opportunities of getting once more into prison.

It follows, then, as a matter of course, that Aid Societies concern themselves, and rightly concern themselves, with first-time prisoners. They are younger ; they are not so hopeless ; they stand a much better chance in the labour world ; they have not been so often through the deadening mill of prison. All these things are true, but with

all these things in their favour, only a very limited amount of success is obtained in the reformation of first-time prisoners. The reasons are obvious. First, no society has the power to enforce any discipline or impose any restraint upon them ; secondly, no society can procure, even for young ex-prisoners, continuous and progressive employment. I know the difficulties, and something of the anxieties that societies experience in this direction, for I have shared them. Honesty is essential even for porters, vanmen and milkmen. The choice of occupation for ex-prisoners under twenty-one is very limited. The pick and shovel are of no use to them. Trades they have none. Clerkships are out of the question. Positions—even humble positions—of trust are not for them. Too old for boys' work, yet not fitted for men's, although first-time prisoners, they are in a difficult position. So are those who try to help them. "Send them to sea !" Well, we are a nation of sailors, but those who go down to the sea in ships do so of their own choice. For them the sea has an attraction ; they love it—or they think they love it when they enter on the life. But all English youths do not love the sea ; neither are all fitted for a sailor's life.

But supposing the sea be decided upon, in what capacity are they to go ? They cannot go as sailors, nor yet as apprentices ; neither can they go as stewards or cooks. The difficulty of sending them to sea is scarcely less than that of finding them occupation ashore. Numbers of them are put on coasting vessels, it is true ; but this course is certain to fail—and it does fail. Their first

voyage, in sight of land all the time, may last a week—maybe a fortnight. At the end of the voyage they are paid off at the port where the ship discharges its cargo. During the time aboard they have had a rough time. The voyage has lasted long enough to make them heartily and bodily sick of the sea ; but it has not lasted long enough to inure them to the life and give them a liking for it, while the comfort aboard a “ collier ” makes them sigh for the comforts of prison. If not paid off at the first port, a good many youths, to use their own expression, “ can’t stick it,” so they “ bunk ” at the first opportunity. Still, they have been “ sent to sea,” and figure accordingly in the published report and statistics. This course is, I contend, unfair even to discharged prisoners. It is not only a foredoomed failure, but it lands youths in positions where they are certain to get into mischief. Some of them tramp back to London, after having sold their “ kit,” which had been bought for them out of their prison earnings. No ; it is idle to suppose that youths who have been subject to no discipline other than that of prison will be reformed and induced to work steadily and persistently by a few days’ unpleasant experience on a coasting vessel.

Quite recently a strong youth came to see me. I had met him in prison, where the Governor quite wisely had him trained for a ship’s cook. He had behaved well in prison and obtained all his marks, and his sentence was long enough to allow him to earn a substantial gratuity. This was spent by an agent of a society in buying a very meagre

outfit and a railway-ticket to Hull. The youth supposed that he was going to have a berth on an ocean-going steamer, but no such berth was forthcoming. Ultimately he was shipped aboard a small coaster with a cargo of coals for Southend. At the end of seventeen days he was paid off at Southend. By arrangement, he was to receive 30s. per month for his services, and should therefore have received at least 17s. He was considerably surprised to find that only 9s. was forthcoming, the skipper telling him, and producing a document to that effect, that there was a lien upon his first wages of 8s. for a "shipping fee" which he, the skipper, had paid to the man who introduced him. He stayed in Southend for a short time looking for another berth, for his discharge-note was in order, and his conduct appears to have been satisfactory. But berths are not to be had at Southend, so with his last money he paid his fare to London, where he landed penniless. This custom of paying "hangers-on" at the docks of large seaports a sum of money for "shipping" youths prevails largely, and a most unsatisfactory practice it is. I have personally known several men engaged in what is termed rescue work resort largely to this method of getting rid of responsibilities they themselves have undertaken, and which they ought to bear, or honestly say at the outset that they cannot undertake them. The fact is that prison youths are not wanted even at sea, or, if they are, it is under such circumstances that the hope of their doing any good for themselves must be abandoned. "Send them to sea" has too long been a catchword. Whether it

ever did cure youths of idleness and dishonesty I am doubtful, but I am certain, at any rate, that it does not at the present time act as the grand specific.

The navy will not accept prison youths ; the mercantile marine will have none of them, and short coasting voyages are worse than useless ; for honesty and industry are estimable qualities even at sea. It would be well indeed if all Prisoners' Aid Societies and all those engaged in similar work would plainly and unmistakably state the difficulties they experience when called on to find situations or employment for discharged prisoners, be they young, middle-aged, or old ; well for the discharged prisoners themselves to know the truth at once, rather than that they should go on calling day after day at any office, and waiting hour after hour among many others to see if anything has "come in," for nothing with the least resemblance to regular work can "come in"; well, too, for the public if they could understand the difficulties under which societies labour, and the difficulties which ex-prisoners have to face. Better still would it be for our authorities to clearly understand these matters, for then surely more effectual methods would be found for dealing with those who, either from incapacity, desire, or social circumstances, appear quite willing to spend their days in prison. With the older prisoners I am not now concerned, for the Home Secretary and his advisers fully recognize that for them new methods must be tried, and their Bill now before Parliament makes it sufficiently evident ; but why not begin with them earlier in life ? Surely, if the

fact of an elderly man having been committed four times on indictment is sufficient to stamp him as "habitual," for whom a more drastic treatment must be provided, then the fact of a youth or young man under twenty-five having been in prison an equal number of times, coupled with the fact that he is homeless and workless, ought to be quite sufficient to ensure him a long period of useful discipline in some place other than prison. By some such means the supply of young criminals, that at present seems inexhaustible, would be stopped, and the difficulty with regard to older criminals would almost vanish. And pity demands it, for the bulk of these young men have had but little chance in life. Birth and environment have been against them ; of home life in its full sense they have known nothing ; to discipline they have been strangers, and they are a product of our present civilization. Can we expect them to exhibit the rarer qualities of human nature ? Temptation is, I know, no respecter of persons, for not seldom do young men of good parentage and splendid environment fail ; but to the young of whom I write temptation is as nothing, for they do not understand the beauty of moral worth, the dignity of man, and the virtue of honest labour. For the future they care nothing ; they live in the present, content to be idle. To eat, to sleep, to enjoy themselves in an animal way, is their idea of life. Their wits are only sharpened to deceive. To get the better—or, as they put it, "to best"—others is their one aim, and a shilling obtained by the "besting" process is worth ten obtained by honest work.

Honesty ! They have heard of it, but to them it has no meaning. They have no moral sense, or at the best but very little. Preach to them ! You might as well preach to the east wind. But they have one soft spot, for, as young cubs have an affection for their dams, so have these youths some affection for their " muvvers "; but that affection does not prevent them striking or kicking their mothers. Oh no, for every passion and whim must be indulged. Oh, the pity of it all ! Shall we deny these youths the greatest blessing given to humanity—discipline ? Punish them, you say. My friend, you cannot confer moral worth with stripes. Longer terms of imprisonment ! They will eat your food, lie in your beds, and make themselves as comfortable as possible. Like animals, they will " nestle down." But they behave themselves in prison. Ay, they do that, for they want all the advantages they can obtain. But they behave themselves principally because they are under authority, and obedience means to them some creature comfort. Discipline ! They understand it only when it is compulsory. Let us give these lads a chance ; let us make up to them the loss society has inflicted on them by refusing them opportunities of wholesome discipline ; let us stop for ever the senseless round of short terms of imprisonment ; let us find some method for giving them lengthened—wholesome manual and technical training—for their own sakes, if you will ; if not, then for our own.

I have mentioned the army for them, not because I am enamoured of the army, but because it appears to offer at once restraint and discipline,

with a measure of freedom, and opportunities for technical training. But wiser heads than mine may formulate a better plan ; if so, I am for it. My heart goes out to the lads, though they sometimes weary me, for I know—and no one knows better—that they have had as yet no fair chance in life.

The following account, given to me by a young man who had served a sentence of six months' hard labour in one of our large prisons, may prove interesting, for it will serve to show the exact life of a prisoner treated under the Borstal system. I give it as written by the ex-prisoner himself. He was twenty-one years of age, was 5 feet 11 inches in height. As a boy he had been a telegraph messenger, and afterwards a postman ; but having stolen postal orders, he received the above sentence. It will be observed that he was placed in the bookbinding department, and that the greatest amount of hard labour he performed was three and three-quarter hours per day, and this at a trade of which he had not the slightest previous knowledge—a trade, too, that requires not only skill, but celerity of movement, and, moreover, a trade at which there was not the slightest chance of his obtaining employment when at liberty. He did not average three hours' real work per day, and this works out at forty-three days' work of ten hours per day for the whole six months. It is obvious that no one can get a useful knowledge of bookbinding in forty-three days of real hard work. In his case, the "trade" taught proved of no use whatever on his discharge. He was very quickly in another prison, again for dishonesty ;

but his previous sentence not being discovered, his sentence was a very light one. If I am to believe a letter that I received from him, he is now in the army, and, of course, had to make a false attestation when he enlisted.

It will be noticed that he speaks well of the treatment received in prison, and testifies to the kindness of all the officials. On this point I can corroborate him, for I know something of those who had charge of him, and feel sure that it would have been a great disappointment to them had he on a second occasion been committed to their charge. His failure cannot be charged to the prison officials. They honestly did their best, for they were genuinely interested in him. Neither do I say that any prison system would have saved him, but I do say—and in this I think most reasonable people will agree with me—that very light work done at a very deliberate pace is not sufficient, even in prison, for a young man of his health, build, and capacity. I think, too, most people will agree that if young men are to be taught trades in prison, they should be taught under conditions that approximate to outside conditions so far as style, pace, and hours of work are concerned.

Prison industries present a very difficult problem. I believe the officials would be glad to give prisoners twice the amount of work they are at present given; but they have not the work to give them, so a life of semi-idleness results.

Finally, it is to be hoped that the new probation system will be so thoroughly worked that large numbers of young men will be kept out of prison,

for at present prisons do not punish, neither do they reform in the majority of cases.

I now give the ex-prisoner's statement :

How I SPENT MY LIFE IN PRISON.

By a Juvenile Adult.

"Four o'clock was just striking, and there I stood in the prisoners' dock at the Old Bailey. The judge, having considered the case, pronounced the sentence : 'Six months' hard labour.' I was then taken back and put into a cell, and was given a hunch of bread and a piece of cheese. About six o'clock I was taken in a prison-van to prison, where I arrived about 7.15. I was then taken to the reception-hall, and after being searched and all particulars taken, I was told to strip, and all my property was entered in a large book, and I had to sign to acknowledge that all my belongings were duly entered. I then had a bath, and was given my prison attire. I was then given a tin containing a pint of porridge and 8 ounces of bread. After having eaten part of this—for I tackled it—I was given two sheets, a pillow-sheet, and towel, and then taken into a large hall containing 352 cells, and put into one of them. Thus my arrival at that large establishment.

"My daily duty for the first fourteen days was : Arise at 6 a.m. and clean my cell ; breakfast at 7.15 a.m., and then I had to scrub and sweep my cell on alternate days. At 8.30 I had to put out my dust or bucket, and at 8.45 I went to chapel. At 9.40 to 10.40 drill, then back in my cell for the rest of the day, having to work in my cell. Dinner

was given me at twelve o'clock, and supper at five o'clock. At seven o'clock I had to put out my work.

" After the first fourteen days I was put into the J.A. bookbinders' shop, and my days were then changed. I arose at 6 a.m., shop at 6.30 to 7.15, breakfast 7.15 to 8.30, chapel at 8.45 to 9.20, drill 9.40 to 10.40, school 10.45 to 11.45, dinner 12 o'clock to 1.30, shop 1.45 to 4.45, supper at 5 o'clock. Thus my change till the first of March. After this I went to drill before breakfast, and my duties were as follows : Arise 6 a.m., drill 6.30 to 7.15, breakfast 7.15 to 8.30, chapel 8.45 to 9.20, shop 9.30 to 10.30, school 10.45 to 11.45, dinner 12 o'clock to 1.30, shop 1.45 to 4.45, and back to my cell for that day.

" On Wednesday I went to the schoolroom, where a lecture was given by gentlemen to all the J.A. prisoners who had done more than one month. This was from 5.30 to 6.30, and on Friday there was a choir-practice at the same time for the same prisoners.

" The food I could not get on with at all at first, but gradually I had to eat, till after three months, when I did not find it enough ; but when I had done five months, I seemed perfectly satisfied with it. I found that the Sundays were the worst of all prison life. I was awakened at 7 a.m., breakfast 7.15 to 8.30, chapel 8.50 to 10.30, exercise 10.50 to 11.20 (if weather permitted), dinner 12 o'clock to 1.30, chapel 1.45 to 2.45, and supper at about 4.15 to 4.30 ; and, as I could not bear to sit about, I went to bed every Sunday by five o'clock the latest. I was searched three times a day, but

not on Sundays, and a general search once a fortnight, when I was kept in my cell all the afternoon. The last of every month I was weighed.

"I had obtained all good marks that could be given me, and had earned twenty shillings whilst doing my six months. The Governor, the chaplain, and all the officials were good to me. I was confirmed in prison. The long nights and insufficiency of work were the hardest things to bear."

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST DREAD PENALTY

FOR more than half a century I have taken a great interest in those who, of malice aforethought, and after considerable pains, succeed in taking the lives of others. I remember as if it were to-day the excitement that arose when William Palmer was charged with the murder of John Parsons Cook. For fifty years a vivid impression of all the events and episodes connected with the remarkable trial of that remarkable man has remained with me. I was then a boy of eleven, but Palmer was well known to the boys of Rugeley, and to myself amongst them. Palmer attended church on Sundays, when racing engagements allowed, and sat in his family pew, fairly close to the schoolboys, of whom I happened to be one. He was most particular about behaviour in church—not only his own, but that of the schoolboys also. Even now I can see him coming into church with some member of his family, with firm walk and clanging heel. I can remember how he stood up to pray into his top-hat a lengthened prayer on entering his pew. I remember, too, that his clothing was always black,

and that a crape mourning band was always in evidence on his hat, for funerals were numerous in the Palmer family. But we lads thought nothing of the funerals ; but we knew that Palmer's eye was upon us, if we did not behave discreetly in church ; we knew he had more than once pulled the ears of boys that misbehaved. We knew, too, that Palmer's mother had an easily accessible garden, in which were plenty of juicy apples and toothsome cherries.

Apart from his staid and correct manner at church, Palmer was a bluff, hearty fellow, well known and well liked in our little town, where he frequently doctored the poor for nothing ; and it was always understood that Palmer's brother George, a solicitor, was also equally ready to give his services free of charge to the poor. It was only natural, then, that the Palmers were liked in our town—for it was a very small town. Grave faces, I remember, had been plentiful in Rugeley for some weeks and things had been going on that we boys did not understand. We knew the names of Palmer's horses, and felt any amount of interest in Blinkbonny and Goldfinder ; but we did not understand the gloom that had settled on the town, for older people spoke with bated breath, and when boys drew near the conversation ceased or the lads were driven away. We knew the name of Palmer was whispered continuously. What did it all mean ? At length mystery, reticence, and whispered suspicions were useless. Palmer had been arrested for the murder of John Parsons Cook, whose body lay in our churchyard, and whose funeral we had witnessed.

Now the excitement began. Rugeley became almost the hub of the universe. Strange people arrived from everywhere, and the quiet town became a Babel.

I remember with what awe we gazed at Cook's grave after the body had been exhumed and returned to its resting-place. We knew that some part of the body had been taken away and sent to London for great men to examine. We boys even discussed the ultimate destination of the parts taken away, and wondered if they would ever get back to poor Cook. How well I remember the exciting events of that long and dramatic trial in London ! Rugeley people were poor in those days, and newspapers were dear, so we borrowed where we could, and lent to others when we possessed. I read aloud the records of that trial to all sorts of poor people, so I have cause to remember it. I prosecuted Palmer, and I defended him ; I was witness, and I was judge ; I claimed a triumphant acquittal, and I demanded his condemnation ; I cross-examined the great analyst, and even at that age began to learn something of the nature and effects of strychnine. I thrilled with it all, but I believed Palmer to be innocent, and in a measure I was proud of a townsman who could stand up bravely against all the big men in London and show no fear. Oh, but he was a brave man ! He must be innocent ! And when the trial was all over, and Palmer was brought to Stafford to pay the penalty of his crime, do I not remember how all the world rushed to Stafford to see him hanged ? Ay, I remember how people tramped all day through

Rugeley to Stafford, and how they stood all through the night in Stafford streets waiting, waiting for eight o'clock the next morning. Yes, I remember it all ; and I remember, too, that the cherries in a certain garden nevermore had any attractions ! But I remember, too, that Palmer died game, showing no fear, betraying no anxiety, with a good appetite to the last and a firm step to the scaffold.

Surely Palmer was innocent, and was supported by the knowledge of his innocence. Murderers had fearsome consciences ; they were haunted by a sense of their guilt, and by the eyes or the spirits of their victims.

So I felt and so I reasoned about murderers when I was a boy. I have since those days had many opportunities of correcting my judgment, and now I no longer believe that a bold, cool, collected behaviour, together with the possession of a good appetite, is synonymous with innocence. For I have seen enough to justify me in saying that a calm and brave bearing is more likely to be indicative of guilt than of innocence. But the public and certain portions of the press still translate callous behaviour into a proof of innocence, and sometimes convert prisoners into heroes.

No greater mistake could be made, for a prisoner's behaviour has nothing do with to his guilt or innocence. On the whole, fear or distress are far more likely to indicate innocence than they are to denote guilt. This I believe to hold good of all prisoners, not only of those charged with the capital offence. I have failed

to observe in prisoners who were undoubtedly guilty the furtive look that is supposed to be peculiar to guilt. I have watched closely and have spoken confidentially to many hundreds, but their eyes met mine as naturally as those of a child. I have been compelled to the conclusion that not only is a bold bearing consistent with the deepest guilt, but also that a natural bearing and a childlike trustfulness are by no means to be taken as signs of innocence. Of the behaviour of innocent people when charged with crime, fortunately, we do not get many opportunities of observation ; still, I have seen some, and can bear testimony that they were a great deal more confused, excited, and unreliable than prisoners who were undeniably guilty. Such prisoners often contradict themselves, and sometimes depart from the truth when attempting to defend themselves. It is palpable to everyone that they feel their position, and fear the consequences. I have seen such astounding coolness and presence of mind, coupled with apparent candour and sincerity, among guilty prisoners that when I know of a prisoner exhibiting these qualities I almost instinctively suspect him. An innocent man, in his anxiety, may prevaricate through fear and confusion ; but the veritably guilty man is careful in these matters, though he may be sometimes a little too clever.

The psychology of prisoners has, then, for years been a favourite study with me, and a very interesting study I have found it. In my endeavours to discover the state of mind that existed and caused certain prisoners to commit

serious crimes, I have sometimes discovered, almost hidden in the dark recesses of the mind, some little shadow of some small thing that to me seemed quite absurd, but which to the prisoner loomed so large, so real, and so important, that he regarded it as a sufficient justification for his deed. To myself the crime and the something in the prisoner's mind appeared to have no possible connection, yet unmistakably, if the prisoners were to be believed, they were cause and effect. Now, from this kind of mania—for such it undoubtedly is—small and ridiculous as it seems—and I have met it too often not to be certain as to its existence—a double question is presented: What is the cause of that little something in the prisoner's mind? and why has it caused the prisoner to commit a certain action? I have never been able to get any light upon these questions, but have had to content myself with the knowledge that the mental equipment of that class of criminals is altogether different to that of ordinary individuals. I am not here speaking of a defined mania that dominates the life, stirs the passions, and leads directly to the perpetration of a crime—cause and effect in such a case are obvious, though, of course, the cause of the cause is still obscure—but I am speaking of silly little somethings that float about in certain minds, that refuse to be ejected, that entail much misery and suffering, and finally crime. Possibly this state of mind may be the outcome of indigestion, even as an extra severe sentence upon a prisoner may be the outcome of indigestion in a judge: for it is quite possible to suppose a case

in which judge and prisoner suffered from a like cause ; but the one has committed a crime because of it, and the other inflicts unmerited punishment because of it. Two things are very clear to me : first, that our judges and magistrates ought to be in the very best of health when performing their duties ; secondly, that pathological causes enter very largely into the perpetration of crime. Ill-health may make a judge irritable and severe, and so distort his judgment, and excuses are made for him ; for it is whispered he is a martyr to gout, indigestion, or some equally trying malady. If so, he certainly ought not to be a judge, for health and temper are absolutely necessary for one who has to administer justice and act as the arbiter of other people's fate. But this excuse is not made for prisoners. Yet in hundreds of cases it might honestly be made ; for while they may not have been influenced by gout or indigestion, they have been influenced by pathological causes, and the two things are equal.

I am persuaded, after many years' close observation and many years' friendship with criminals, that disease, mental or physical, is a tremendous factor in the causation of crime. The "criminal class" is often spoken of, and it might be supposed that there is a distinct class of people to whom the appellation applies. My experience teaches me that there is no "criminal class," but there are plenty of criminals. The low forehead and the square jaw, the scowling eye and the stubbly beard, do not denote criminality ; the receding forehead, the weak eye, and the almost absence of chin, do not indicate criminal instincts.

Nothing of the sort. All these things are consistent with decent living, a fair amount of intelligence, and some moral purpose. On the other hand, a well-built body, a well-shaped head, a handsome face, a clean skin, and a bright eye are consistent with the basest criminality. Some of the worst criminals I have met—real and dangerous criminals—were handsome as Apollo. But there does exist a class—and, unfortunately, a very large class—who have very limited intelligence, who appear to be retrogressing physically, mentally, and morally, of whom a large proportion commit various kinds of offences—not from criminal instincts, but from stunted or undeveloped intelligence and lack of reasoning power.

But I am digressing, for it is not my purpose in this chapter to speak of criminals in general, but rather of those whom I have personally met charged with murder, and who were convicted, some paying the full penalty. These I want to consider more fully. From this list I must eliminate manslayers who had killed in the heat of passion or in a drunken quarrel, for they were not murderers at heart. Their mental condition was understandable, and their bearing while undergoing trial is beside the question. Neither do I wish to include married or single women who had killed their offspring at childbirth or soon after, for they are outside my consideration. But I want to speak plainly about those who had committed prearranged murders, and carried them out with considerable skill.

In refreshing my memory about these, I find that they held several characteristics in common :

1. Not one of them exhibited any sense of shame, no matter how disgraceful the attendant circumstances.
2. Not one of them exhibited any nervousness or fear of the consequences.
3. Those who admitted their guilt justified their actions, and appeared to believe that they had done the right thing.
4. Those who denied their guilt, denied it with cool and positive assurance, and denied it to the last with almost contempt, as if the charge was more an insult than anything serious.
5. None of them betrayed the slightest sorrow.
6. Every one of them appeared of sound mind so far as reasoning powers were concerned, for they were quite lucid, and remarkably quick to see a point in their favour.
7. None of them were fully able to realize the position in which they stood, as ordinary people must have realized it.

Of course, everyone will admit that the man or woman who can plan and carry out a murder, whether that murder is likely to be detected or not, is not, and cannot be, a normal person ; but what we require to know is where they depart from the normal, and how and why they depart from the normal.

I would like to say that the particulars just given are the results not only of my observation of prisoners when in the dock, but also of many personal and private conversations with them. In a word, I do not consider that any of these prisoners were thoroughly sane. It may be said —it is often said—that in human nature “ we find

what we look for," and there is truth in the saying ; but when trying to understand these people, I had not the slightest idea of what I was seeking. I knew there must be some cause that led to the crime, something out of the ordinary in their minds, but what it was and how to find it was more than I could tell. So I have watched, have talked and listened. For these prisoners were always ready to talk : there was no secrecy with them, excepting with regard to the crime ; otherwise they were talkative enough. It takes some time and patience to discover whether or not in people there is a suspicion of brain trouble. They appear so natural that several lengthened conversations may be required before anything at all is revealed. I trust that it will not be thought that I am betraying confidences that poor wretches have given to me, for no prisoner, guilty or innocent, ever confided in me without such confidences being considered sacred ; but as their cases are not of recent date, no harm can be done, and possibly good may ensue, if I give some particulars that I gained regarding their mental peculiarities. Being anxious to ascertain how far my experience was confirmed by the experience of others, quite recently I put a question to the chaplain of one of our largest prisons, and whose experience was much greater than my own in this particular direction. I asked him whether he had ever known anyone who was about to suffer the death penalty for a premeditated and cleverly contrived murder exhibit any sense of remorse, sorrow, or fear. His answer was exactly what I expected—" that he had performed his last sad offices for a consider-

able number of such prisoners, and that he had discovered neither fear nor remorse in any of them ; with one exception, they all denied their guilt.” I want it to be perfectly clear that I am speaking now about murderers who committed premeditated crimes that had been cleverly carried out, impromptu murders not being considered.

I now propose to give a sufficient number of examples to prove my point. In a poor street within two hundred yards of my own door I had frequently seen a beautiful boy of about four years old. His appearance, his clothing, his cleanliness, and even his speech, told unmistakably that he was not belonging to the poor. I knew the old people that he lived with, and felt quite sure that it was not owing to their exertions that he was so beautifully dressed and kept so spotlessly clean, for they were old, feeble, and very poor. But the old people had a daughter living with them, and it was the daughter who had charge of the child, for the little fellow was a “nurse-child.” Good payment must have been given for the care of the child, for it was the only source of income for the household. The foster-mother was devoted to the boy, and he reflected every credit upon her love and care. Many times when I have met them I have spoken a cheery word to the little fellow, never dreaming of the coming tragedy, or that I should meet his real mother and discuss his death with her. The dead body of a boy between four and five years of age had been discovered in the women’s lavatory of a North London railway-station. Without doubt the child had been ruthlessly murdered. His head had been smashed ; his

face was crushed beyond recognition. A calcined brick lay close by the body, and had evidently been used for perpetrating the deed. No other trace of the murder was forthcoming, and the body was taken to the nearest mortuary. Meanwhile the foster-mother and her aged parents were mourning the loss of the bonny boy, for the boy's mother had taken him from them that he might begin his education in a boarding-school for young children at Brighton. They had learned to love the child, and now he was gone. The old people missed him sadly, and the nurse-mother wept for him. The house seemed so dull without him. The murder occurred on a Saturday. On one of the early days of the ensuing week a neighbour chanced to tell the nurse-mother that she had read in a Sunday paper about the discovery of a child's mangled body at a North London railway-station, and also that the body remained unidentified at the mortuary. Although the nurse had not the slightest suspicion—for on the Saturday morning she had accompanied the boy and his mother to London Bridge, where tickets had been taken for Brighton, and the nurse had seen them safely on the correct platform and the train waiting—yet the loss of her nurse-child had so affected her that she wept as her neighbour told her of the newspaper account, and they went together to the mortuary, which was some miles away, to see the "other little dear." It was some years before the nurse recovered from the shock she sustained on her visit to the mortuary, for the mangled and disfigured body was that of her late charge—her "dear Manfred." I question whether even now

she has recovered, for several times I know that she has been ill, and sometimes when I have been sent for, she seemed likely to lose her reason, the one and only thing that occupied her mind being the tragic discovery of her dear boy's maimed body. But the child's mother undoubtedly went to Brighton on that particular Saturday afternoon. She intended to go to Brighton, not for the purpose of placing her child in a school, but for another purpose by no means so praiseworthy, yet for a purpose that was esteemed by her a sufficient justification for the murder of the child. She had lured a young man into a promise to spend the week-end with her at Brighton, and some reason had to be found and given for her visit. Placing the child in a suitable school seemed a sufficient reason, so the nurse was instructed to get the boy's clothing ready and accompany her to London Bridge. This was accordingly done, and the nurse returned home, fully believing that the boy and his mother were on the way to Brighton. But the mother did not go to Brighton by that train. She allowed it to go without her, and when the nurse was safely away she left the platform, saying that she had missed it, but would return and go by a later train. She then took a bus for Broad Street Station, there taking a return ticket for Dalston, where she alighted. The lavatory in question was on the platform, consequently she did not pass the ticket-barrier. After accomplishing her object with the brick I have referred to, and which she had carried in her reticule all day for the purpose—for she had taken it from the garden of the house where she lived—she

returned to Broad Street, giving her correct ticket up, and then on to London Bridge and Brighton early enough to meet the young man, who was about half her own age, and who spent the week-end with her.

I have given briefly the particulars of this gruesome affair because they lead up to the mental conditions of the murderer. It will be noticed that the murder was skilfully contrived beforehand ; that the object to be gained was indulgence with a young man but little more than half her age ; that within a few hours of killing her own boy she smilingly met the young man as if nothing had happened. All these things are extraordinary, but when to these some particulars regarding the murderer are added, the character of the whole affair becomes more extraordinary still. She was a governess, clever and exceedingly well educated, with scientific accomplishments. She was about thirty-six years of age, by no means soft or voluptuous in appearance, but with a hard, strong cast of face. She was doing well in a pecuniary sense, and her friends were also in good circumstances.

In considering the case, the first thing that strikes me is that when a woman of her character, standing and appearance gives birth to an illegitimate child, at an age when girlhood has long passed, there is an absolute departure from the normal, there is something wrong. I need not give any details of her trial, only to say the facts I have given were fully proved, and to add that she was found guilty, sentenced, and hanged.

It is of her bearing and demeanour that I wish

to speak. Of course, she protested her innocence ; any other person might be guilty, but it was absurd to hint that she was guilty. Yet she betrayed no indignation. To her it was Euclid over again, with *quod erat faciendum* as the result of the problem. She was cool, alert, and fearless ; she showed no emotion, no anxiety, no feeling. The killing of a sheep could not have been a matter of less importance to her than was the murder of her own child. Such was her demeanour at the inquest and at the police-court proceedings, and this attitude she maintained to the end.

In her private conversation with me she was clear, animated, and apparently calm and frank. I never saw the least symptoms of nervousness, and her eyes met mine as naturally and unconcernedly as if the charge she had to meet had not the remotest connection with herself. Her last words to me were : "When I am discharged, I shall invite myself to tea with Mrs. Holmes and yourself, for I am supported by the thought that you firmly believe in my innocence." I had never told her this, for I had not discussed her guilt or innocence. She had talked to me, and I had listened, putting a question occasionally to her. I could believe no other than that she was verily guilty, but I did not tell her so—I had no right to tell her so—but I listened and waited for an admission that would throw some little light upon the state of her mind, and give me a faint idea of the cause that led her to plan and execute the terrible deed. This she did, and I am persuaded that she took away the boy to furnish her with

some excuse for spending the week-end at Brighton. I leave it to others to decide upon her sanity, though personally I am charitable enough to think she was insane. It is certain that she was animated with fierce passion ; it is also certain that in other respects she was cold as an iceberg. For the death of her beautiful boy, whether she was guilty or innocent of it, never troubled her for a moment. Does a lust for blood accompany an excess of the other passion in a woman of her temperament and characteristics ? This I do not know, but I have no doubt that wiser people do know. At any rate, with hands that had cruelly battered the life out of her own child, and while the blood of that child was still hot upon them, she welcomed her male friend. I profess that I find some comfort in the belief that she was insane. Had her insanity been just a little more obvious, she might have escaped the death penalty and ended her days in a criminal lunatic asylum.

But I do not think the question of her sanity was ever raised. He would have been a bold man that raised it, in the face of her accomplishments and self-control. Some day we shall, perhaps, apply different methods to test sanity than those now employed, and we shall look for other symptoms in diagnosis than those we look for now. The most dangerous madness is not that which is patent to everybody—the wild or vacant eyes, the inconsequent or violent speech, the manifest delusions, and the inability to conduct one's own affairs. These are simple enough ; but the possessors of these characteristics are often

harmless to the community. But when the madness is half madness, and is covered with a show of reason, it is then that danger is to be feared.

In the case I am now about to give insanity was just a little more apparent, though I do not think it was more real. But its manifestation was of sufficient magnitude to prevent capital punishment.

A young woman whose character was beyond reproach, and whose ability and business aptitude gave the greatest pleasure to her employer and his wife, was engaged as the manageress of a department in a drapery and millinery shop in North London. She had been in the situation for some months, and perfect confidence existed between the different parties. One hot Sunday afternoon she suddenly awoke from an afternoon nap with the conviction that she had been criminally assaulted by her employer. The fact that she was in her own room with the door fastened did not weigh with her at all. She declared that her employer was the guilty person. The fact that he and his wife spent the afternoon out of doors was nothing to her. Possessed with this extraordinary idea, she left London at once for a town on the South Coast, where her brother lived. Her brother appears to have accepted her statement without question or demur, and to him the delusion became as real as to his sister. He armed her with an exquisitely made and very formidable dagger, and provided himself with an equally dangerous pistol and cartridges. Thus armed, they came to London—he to take vengeance upon the man who had dishonoured his

sister, she to point out the man, and to be ready with the dagger if the pistol failed to take effect. The brother did not fail, for he shot the man dead. Now that vengeance was satisfied, the couple were again harmless, for neither brother nor sister attempted to do any more injury. They were arrested, and gave up their arms willingly enough. They declared that they had done the deed, and that they intended to kill the man ; that they procured the weapons and came to London for the express purpose. They claimed to be perfectly justified in their joint action. This attitude they maintained before the court, for when asked if they wished to put any questions to the witnesses, " Oh no !" was the reply. " Of what use would they be ? We did it ; we are glad that we did it. The consequences do not matter." There was quite a little dispute between the sister and brother. He declared that as he killed the man he alone was entitled to the glory and the punishment ; but the sister declared that it was done at her request, and also that she was prepared to kill if her brother had failed. Both were found guilty, and both were committed to a criminal lunatic asylum. Yet they had every appearance of being thoroughly sane ; their manner, their speech, their reasoning powers, and everything appertaining to them, savoured of clear reason, their delusion alone excepted. If that delusion had not been so manifest, undoubtedly they would have been hanged. There seems to me to be no point from which a line can be drawn to divide insanity from sanity. At present we have but clumsy, uncertain, and very speculative

methods of deciding upon a prisoner's sanity—methods that must often result in the punishment, if not the death, of the prisoners who suffer from some kind of mental disease. I am inclined to believe that the more all traces of madness are hidden by clever murderers, the stronger is the probability of that madness existing, for the very essence of cunning is employed in hiding it. They will cheerfully contemplate the executioner's rope rather than be considered mad. The brother and sister to whom I have referred would have cheerfully accepted the death penalty in preference to committal to a lunatic asylum. In one of my conversations with the brother, I suddenly asked him : "Have any of your relations been detained in lunatic asylums ?" He was quite ready for me, and he replied : "I am as sane as you are ; and if you are ever placed in a similar situation to mine, I hope you will prove as sane as I have."

The more I think over the two cases—one woman found sane and hanged, the other declared insane and sent to a lunatic asylum—the more I am convinced that equal justice has not been done. Probably the madness in both women proceeded from the same cause, and it is clear that neither of them had the slightest compunction about shedding blood.

I will deal briefly with my next case, and of a truth there is not much to be said. He was a clerk about twenty-six years of age. He had married a decent young woman, for whom he had made no provision other than a loaded pistol. He had no home and no money, excepting a few

pounds that he had embezzled, and with this he had paid the marriage expenses. With his last few shillings he hired a cab ; drove, accompanied by his wife, from place to place, in pretence of finding a home for her ; and, finally, while still in the cab, he did the deed for which he had prepared—he shot her. He made no attempt to escape ; he offered no reason for his deed ; he was quite satisfied with his action ; and when before the court he was absolutely unconcerned. I had several conversations with him, and as he had publicly owned to the deed, there was no harm in my assumption of his guilt. I said to him : “ Tell me why you did this cruel deed ? ” He said : “ I don’t consider it a cruel deed. What else could I do ? You would have done the same.” Argument, of course, was out of the question, but I did venture to express the hope that I might not have done what he had done, when he again replied : “ You think so now ; but if you had to do it, you would do it ! ” And this frame of mind he maintained to the end—for he was hanged.

I do not say that he ought not to have been hanged, for it is difficult to point out in what other way he could have been dealt with ; but so long as insanity is considered a sufficient reason for preventing the death penalty, I do say that every possible means should be taken to test a prisoner’s sanity before a final decision is arrived at ; and, further, that the appearance of positive sanity is under such circumstances an indication of insanity. Every criminal, in addition to murderers, ought to be subjected to a careful and



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prolonged scrutiny and mental examination by experts. The cost would not be great, and I am fully sure the results would compensate if the expense was great. Prisons ought to become psychological observatories, and be made to furnish us with a vast amount of useful information. There are so many things we ought to know, and might know if we would only take pains to know. It might be that the information obtained would make us sad and excite our fear ; it might be that our pity would be deeply stirred, and that we should have a whole army of human beings upon our hands, for whom we might feel hopeless and helpless. But we have these even now, and for them imprisonment or hanging is a ready and simple plan that suffices us ! But ought they to suffice in these enlightened days ? I think not. At any rate, we ought to gather knowledge. With knowledge will come power, and with power better methods of dealing with erring or afflicted humanity. For the days will surely come when the hangman's rope will be seldom in requisition ; when all the unhealthy and demoralizing publicity attaching to a murder trial will be a thing of the past ; when criminals will not be made into public heroes, because of the speculative and perhaps equal chances of life or death ; when morbid and widespread sentiment will not be created by public appeals to the Home Secretary ; and, perhaps best of all, when diseased minds will be no longer influenced by the unhealthy publicity of the details pertaining to a death sentence to commit the other crimes for which no motives have been apparent.

Since writing the above chapter, the following appeared in the daily papers of August 5, 1908 :

" Thomas Siddle, a bricklayer, was yesterday executed at Hull for the murder of his wife in June last. The crime was a particularly callous one. Siddle was to have gone to prison for not paying his wife's maintenance under a separation order. On the day, however, he visited her, and after some conversation savagely attacked her with a razor. *Before his execution the prisoner ate a hearty breakfast, and smiled at the warders as he walked firmly to the scaffold.*"

CHAPTER VIII

HOUSING THE POOR

AND now, so far as this book is concerned, I have done with prisoners and criminals, so I turn right gladly to the other side of my life. For my life is dual, one half being given to sinners and the other to saints. I have spoken freely about the difficulties of prisoners and with prisoners ; let me now tell of the struggles, difficulties, and virtues of the industrious poor. I will draw a veil over the ignorance, the drunkenness, the wastefulness, and the cupidity of the very poor. Other people may find these matters congenial, and may dilate upon them, but such a task is not for me. I know these things exist—I do not wonder at their existence—but other things exist also—things that warm my heart and stir my blood—and of them I want to tell. And I have some right to speak, for I know the very poor as few can know them. From personal touch and friendly communion my experience has been acquired, and I am proud to think that at least twelve hundred of London's poorest but most industrious women look upon me as their friend and adviser.

When I gave up police-court work, I thought to devote the remainder of my days absolutely to the London home-workers ; but Providence willed it otherwise, so only one-half of a very busy life is at their service. Of what that half reveals I cannot be silent, though I would that some far abler pen than mine would essay the task of describing the difficulties and perils that environ the lives of the industrious poor. I want and mean to be a faithful witness, so I will tell of nothing that I have not seen, I will describe no person that does not exist, and no narrative shall sully my pages that is not true in fact and detail. Imagination is of no service to me. I am as zealous for mere facts as was Mr. Gradgrind himself, and my facts shall be real, self-sufficing facts, out-vying imagination, and conveying their own lesson. If I carry my readers with me, we shall go into strange places and see strange sights and hear piteous stories ; but I shall ask my readers to be heedless of all that is unpleasant, not to be alarmed at forbidding neighbourhoods or disgusted with frowzy women, but to contemplate with me the difficulties and the virtues of the industrious poor, and then, if they will, to worship with me at the shrine of poor humanity.

Quite recently I was invited to take sixty of my poor industrious women to spend a day at Seven-oaks. Among the party was a widow aged sixty and her daughter of thirty-five. They were makers of women's costumes, and had worked till half-past four that very morning in order to have the day's outing. I had known them for years, and many times had I been in their poor home

watching them as, side by side, they sat at their machines. Happy were they in recent years when their united earnings amounted to twenty-one shillings for a week's work of eighty hours. "Tell me," I said to the widow, "how long have you lived in your present house?" "Forty years," said the widow. "Emmy was born in it, and my husband was buried from it. I have been reckoning up, and find that I have paid more than twelve hundred pounds in rent, besides the rates." "Impossible," I said, "out of your earnings!" She said: "We let off part of the house, and that pays the rates and a little over, but we always have to find ten shillings a week for rent." Ten shillings out of twenty-one shillings, when twenty-one was forthcoming, which was by no means the case every week. "We cannot do with less than three rooms—one to work in, one to sleep in, and the little kitchen. I cannot get anything cheaper in the neighbourhood."

Here we come at once upon one of the greatest difficulties of the industrious poor. If they wish to live in any way decently, one-half their earnings disappears in rent.

"We have nowhere to go." The difficulties the poor have in finding suitable—or, indeed, any—rooms that may serve as a shelter for themselves and their children, and be dignified by the name of "home," are almost past belief. All sorts of subterfuges are resorted to, and it is no uncommon thing for a woman, when applying for one or more rooms, to state the number of her children to be less than half what it is in reality. Sometimes, it must be confessed, the people who obtain rooms

by such means are not desirable tenants ; but it is also true that even decent people have to resort to some kind of deception if they are to find shelter at all.

Day after day in London police-courts the difficulty is made manifest. Houses altogether unfit for human habitation have to be closed by order of the authorities ; but, wretched and insanitary as those dwellings are, dangerous to the health and well-being of the community as they may be, they are full to overflowing of poor humanity seeking some cover. But they must "clear out." Their landlords say so, the sanitary authorities say so, and the magistrate confirms the landlord and the sanitary authorities. The one cry, the one plea of all the poor who are to be ejected is : "Where are we to go ? We can't get another place." The kindly magistrate generally allows a few weeks' grace, and tells them to do their best meanwhile to procure other rooms. For some this is a possibility, but for others the period of grace will pass, and on an appointed day an officer of the court will be in Paradise Row or Angel Court, as the case may be, to see that the tenants are ejected without undue violence, and that their miserable belongings are deposited safely in the street.

On dark November days, with the rain coming steadily down, I have frequently seen the débris of such homes, the children keeping watch, and shivering as they watched. I have spoken to the children, asked them about their mother, and their reply has been : "Mother has gone with the baby to look for another place."

Heaven help that mother in her forlorn hope

and desperate search ! I can imagine her clutching the babe tightly to her, holding in her closed hand the shilling that is to act as a deposit for binding a tenancy, her last rent-book in her bosom to show her *bona fides*, going from street to street, from house to house, climbing staircase after staircase, exploring and appealing time after time. She will stoutly declare that she has but two children, when she has six ; she will declare that her husband is a good, sober man, and in regular work, neither of which will be true. Ultimately, she will promise to pay an impossible rent, and tremulously hand over the shilling to bind the contract ; then she will return to the "things," and tell the children of their new home. This is no imaginary picture. It is so very true, so very common, that it does not strike our imagination. The cry of the very poor is ever sounding in our ears : "We have nowhere to live ! We don't know where to go !"

This fear of being homeless, of not being allowed to live in such wretched places as they now inhabit, haunts the very poor through life, and pursues them to the grave. And this worry, anxiety, and trouble falls upon the woman, adding untold suffering to her onerous life ; for it is the woman that has to meet the rent-collector, whose visits come round all too quickly ; she has to mollify him when a few shillings remain unpaid. The wife has to procure other rooms when her husband has fallen out of work, and she receives the inevitable notice to quit when there appears to be a possibility of the family becoming still more numerous. If sickness, contagious or otherwise, comes upon

any of the children, and the shadow of death enters the home, upon the wife comes the heart-breaking task of seeking a new home and conveying her children and "things" to another place. This is no light task. The expense is a consideration, and the old home, bad as it was, had become in many ways dear to her. What more pitiful sight can be imagined than the removal? No pantechnicon is required—a hired barrow is sufficient; and when night has well advanced the goods are conveyed in semi-darkness from the old home to the new.

Think for a moment what a life she lives, to what shifts she is reduced, what privations she endures! Is it any wonder that the children born of her have poor bodies and strange minds?

"The children born of thee are fire and sword,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,"

Tennyson makes King Arthur to say. In many respects these words are true of poor mothers in London. The houses in which they live, the conditions under which they exist, the ceaseless worries and nameless fears they endure, make it absolutely certain that many of the children born will be strange creatures.

And right up to the verge of eternity the fear of being homeless haunts the poor. Let one instance suffice. I was visiting a young married woman whose husband had been sent to prison for some months. She lived in one room, for which she paid, or should have paid, four shillings and six-pence weekly. The street was a very poor street, and the house a very small house. It stood, without

any forecourt, close up to the street pavement. While I was speaking to the young woman a message came that the landlady, who lived downstairs, wanted to speak to me; so down the narrow stairs I went. There being only one room below, I rapped at the door, and a very queer voice told me to "Come in." I went in, and found a very small room, occupied chiefly by a bed, a small table, and several broken chairs. On the bed lay an old woman. Her face was puckered with age, her forehead was deeply furrowed, her eyes were dim, and the hands lying on the quilt were more like claws than human hands. As I stood over her, she looked up and said: "Are you Mr. Holmes? I want my rent." Her voice was so strange and thin that I had some difficulty in understanding her, but I found that the tenant upstairs owed her five weeks' rent, and that, now her husband was in prison, the poor old woman was afraid of losing it. As the matter seemed to trouble her greatly, I told her that I would pay the arrears of her rent. "But I want it now," she went on. "The collector is coming to-morrow, and I shall be put out—I shall be put out." I stroked her thin hair, and told her that I would call early the next morning and give her the money. But the poor woman looked worried and doubtful. I called early the next morning, and found the old woman expecting me. "Have you brought my rent?" were the first words I heard on entering the room. I took up one of her thin hands and opened it, and put a sovereign in it. "That is a sovereign," I said. She held it up, and tried to look at it; but she was not

satisfied, for she said to her daughter, who was standing by : "Jane, is this a sovereign ?" When Jane assured her that it was, the old hand closed convulsively upon it. "Hold out your other hand," I said. She held it open, and I counted five shillings into it. Then that hand closed, and the old head lay a bit closer to the pillow, and an expression of restful satisfaction passed over her withered face. A week later I called at the same house, but the old woman was not there, neither had she been "put out." She had paid the rent-collector when he called, and her rent-book was duly signed ; but the Great Collector had not forgotten her, for He also had called and given her a receipt in full. Her worries were ended.

If we would but think—think of the effect that such anxieties must have upon the present and future generations—I believe that we should realize that first and foremost of all questions affecting the health and happiness of the nation stands the one great question of "housing the very poor"; for the chivalry of our men, the womanliness of our women, the sweetness of our daughters, and the brave hearts of our lads depend upon it.

But if the fear of being "put out" has its terrors, none the less has the continuous occupation of one room its attendant evils. It is so easy for humanity to get used to wretched homes and vile environments, so easy to get accustomed to dirt, thick air, and insanitary conditions, that one does not wonder that poor people who have lived for years under such conditions prefer those conditions to any other. And this holds true even with those who have known the bracing effect of

cold water on their bodies, and have felt the breath of God in their lungs. The return path to dirt is always alluring to the human body. Time and again I have gone into places where I hardly dared to breathe, and in which I could only with the greatest difficulty stay for a few minutes; and when I have sometimes ventured to open a window a look of astonishment crossed the faces of those I had called on, for even the thick atmosphere had become natural.

And other results follow—mental as well as physical. To become, through bad but frightfully dear housing, gradually used to dirt and bad air, till these are looked upon as natural, carries along with it, as part and parcel of itself, another deadening influence. Filth raises no feeling of disgust; high rents produce no sense of injustice, no feelings of resentment: for the poor become absolutely passive. Yes, and passive in more ways than one; for they, without question or demur, accept any payment that may be given them for such services as they can render. Inevitably, they become the prey of the sweater, and work for endless hours at three halfpence per hour; and if the payment for the work they do should, without their permission, be reduced, it only means that a couple of hours more must be added to the long day already worked.

It is this passivity of the poor that appals me. Their negative virtues astonish me, for I find in them no bitterness, no sense of wrong, no idea of rebellion, no burning resentment—not even the feeling that something is wrong, though they

know not what. Their only ambition is to live their little lives in their very little homes ; to be ready weekly with their four shillings for their wretched room in a wretched house ; to have plenty of poorly-paid work, though they sit up all night to do it ; and to sit in poverty and hunger when sufficient work is not to hand, to suffer silently, to bear with passive heroism, and to die unburied by the parish.

Such is the life of many London home-workers, of whom some are my personal friends. But what becomes of this life ? The death of aspiration. A machine-like perseverance and endurance is gradually developed ; but the hope of better things dies : hope cannot exist where oxygen is absent. Then comes the desire to be let alone, and alone to die.

I have met women who had become so used to the terrible conditions under which they lived that no amount of persuasion could induce them to move out of those conditions. Again I draw upon my experience.

One cold day in February a young married man was charged with stealing a piece of pork. I had some conversation with him, and he told me that he was out of work, that his wife and children were starving, and that his widowed mother, who lived in the same house, was in much the same condition. He gave me their address—a poor street in Haggerston—so I visited the family. It was a terrible street even for Haggerston, but it was crowded with humanity. I found the house, and went up the rotten staircase to the first-floor back. There I found the prisoner's wife, sitting

at a machine making babies' boots. In the room was an old broken perambulator, in which were two children, one asleep and the other with that everlasting deceit, a "baby's comforter," in its mouth. As the child fed on the thick air it looked at me with wondering eyes, and the mother kept on working. Presently she stopped and answered my questions. Yes, it was true her husband was out of work. He was good to her, and a sober, industrious man. They paid three and sixpence weekly for their room, when they could. Would I excuse her? She must get on with her work; she wanted to take it in. I excused her, and, leaving her a few shillings, went in search of the older woman.

I found her in another small room; but, small as the room was, there were two beds in it, which were covered with match-boxes. A small table and two old chairs completed the furniture. She was seated making match-boxes as I entered, and I saw her hands moving with that dreadfully automatic movement that has so often made me shudder.

She looked up at me, but on she went. I spoke to her of her son, told her my business, and ultimately sat down and watched her. Poor old woman! She was fifty-six, she told me. She might have been any age over seventy. She was a widow. She had lived in that room thirteen years, having come to it soon after her husband's death. Whilst I was speaking to her she got up from her boxes, took a small saucepan off the miserable fire, and out of it took some boiled rice, put it in an old saucer, sat down, and ate it. It was her dinner.

Afterwards she put the remaining rice in a saucer, covered it with another, and placed it in front of the fire. I soon saw why. A lanky boy of nearly fourteen came in from school, and she pointed to the saucer. He took it, and swallowed the rice, and looked at me. I looked at the boy, and read the history of his life in his face and body. He had been born in that room ; that was his bed in the corner covered with match-boxes. The old woman was his mother. Three and sixpence every week had she paid for that room. Nearly three days of the week she had worked for interminable hours to earn the money that paid for the shelter for herself and the boy.

I will not describe the boy. Was he a boy at all ? All his life he had lived, moved, and had his being in that room ; had fed as I saw him feed, and had breathed the air I was breathing.

He went back to school, and I talked to his mother. She owed no rent ; she had received no parish help. She never went to church or chapel. She wanted nothing from anybody. That little room had become her world, and her only recreation was taking her boxes to the factory. Grimy and yellow were the old hands that kept on with the boxes. I offered her a holiday and rest. There was the rent to be paid. I would pay the rent. She had no clothes suitable. Mrs. Holmes would send her the clothes. There was the boy to be seen to. I would arrange for him. No ; she would not go. Her last word was that she did not wish or care to leave her home. Neither did she. And though years have passed since my

first visit to that one-roomed house, out of it the old woman has not passed, excepting on her usual errand. And fresh air, clean sheets, and relaxation meant nothing to her.

I sat in the dark, damp kitchen of a house in one of the narrow streets of Hoxton. Over my head some very poor clothing was hanging to dry. It was winter-time, and the gloom outside only added to the gloom within, and through a small window the horrors of a London back-yard were suggested rather than revealed.

As I sat watching the widow at her work, and wondered much at the mechanical accuracy of her movements, I felt something touch my leg, and, looking down, found a silent child, about three years of age, on the floor at my feet. I had been in the room some few minutes, and had not previously seen or heard the child, it was so horribly quiet. I picked it up, and placed it on my knee, but it was passive and open-eyed as a big doll. The child had been born in that kitchen on a little substitute for a bed that half-filled the room. Its father was dead, and the widowed mother got a "living" for herself and her children by attaching bits of string to luggage labels, for which interesting work she got fourpence per thousand. In her spare time she took in washing, and the clothes over my head belonged to neighbours.

Fifteen years she had lived in that house. It was her first home after marriage. Till his death, which occurred three years before, her husband had been tenant of the whole house, but always "let off" the upper part, which consisted of two rooms, it being a two-storied house.

He died of consumption in the other room on the ground-floor, which abutted the street pavement. Her child was born in the kitchen as her husband lay dying a few feet away in the front-room. So that wretched house was dear to her, for love, death, and life had been among its visitants, and it became to her a sacred and a solemn place. She became tenant of the house, and continued to let off the two upper rooms ; and with her children round her she continued her life in the lower rooms. The rent was 13s. weekly. She received 7s. 6d. weekly for the two upper rooms, leaving 5s. 6d. weekly to be the burden and anxiety of her life ; so she tied knots and took in washing. The very sight of the knot-tying soon tired me, and the dark, damp atmosphere soon satisfied me. As I rose to leave, the widow invited me to "look at her boy in the other room." We went into the room in front. It was now quite dark, and the only light in the room came through the window from a street-lamp. The widow spoke to someone, but no answer came. I struck a wax match and held it aloft. A glance was enough. I asked the widow to get a lamp, and one of those cheap, dangerous abominations provided for the poor was brought to me.

On the bed lay a strange-looking boy of nine, twisted and deformed in body, wizened in features, suffering writ all over him, yet apathetically and unconcernedly waiting for the end. With the lamp in my hand, I bent over him and spoke kindly to him. He looked at me, then turned away from me ; he would not speak to me.

Poor little fellow ! He had suffered so long and so much that he expected nothing else. He knew that he was dying. What did it matter ? The mothers in London streets are not squeamish, and their young children are very soon made acquainted with the mysteries of life and death.

“ He has been in two hospitals, and I have fetched him home to die,” said the widow to me. “ How long has he lain like this ?” I asked. “ Three months.” “ Who sleeps in that bed with him ?” “ I do, and the little boy you saw in the kitchen.” “ Who sleeps in the kitchen ?” “ Only George : he is fourteen.”

On inquiry, I was told that the dying boy had always been weak and ailing, and also that, when five years of age, he had been knocked down in the street by a cyclist, and that he had been crippled and twisted ever since.

Nearly five years of suffering, and now he had “ come home to die.” Poor little fellow ! What a life for him ! What a death for him ! Born in a dark kitchen while his father lay dying ; four years of joyless poverty in a London street ; five years of suffering, in and out of hospitals ; and now “ home to die.” And he knew it, and waited for the end with contemptuous indifference. But he had not much longer to wait, for in three weeks’ time the blessed end came.

But the widow still takes in washing, damp clothes still hang in her dark kitchen, and by the faint light of her evil-smelling lamp she continues to “ tie her knots ” ; and the silent child is now acquiring some power of expression in the gutter.

Slum property sometimes gets into queer hands.

Sometimes it is almost impossible to find the real owners, and the fixing of responsibility becomes a great difficulty.

A SLUM PROPERTY HOLDER.

An old woman, dressed in greasy black silk, with a bonnet of ancient date, often appeared in one of our courts for process against some of her many tenants. Her hair, plastered with grease, hung round her head in long ringlets ; her face never showed any signs of having been washed ; a long black veil hung from her old bonnet, and black cotton gloves covered her hands. She was the widow of a well-to-do jeweller, and owned some rows of cottage property in one of our poorest neighbourhoods. After her husband's death, she decided to live in one of her cottages and collect her own rents. She brought with her much jewellery, etc., that had not been sold, and there in the slums, with her wealth around her, and all alone, lived the quaint old creature. Week by week she appeared at the court for "orders" against tenants who had not paid their rent. Though seventy-three, she would have no agent ; she could manage her own business. Suddenly she appeared as an applicant for advice. She had married : her husband was a carpenter, aged twenty-one. They had been married but a few days, and her husband refused to go to work—so she told the magistrate. "Well, you know, madam, that you have plenty for both," said the magistrate. "That's what he says, but I tell him that I did not marry him that I might keep him." She got neither help nor comfort from the magis-

trate, so she tottered out of the court, grumbling as she went. In a few days she appeared again. "My husband has stolen some of my jewellery." Again she got no comfort. Still again she complained. "My husband has been collecting my rents." "Send a notice to your tenants warning them not to pay your husband." She did so ; the husband did the same, warning the tenants not to pay his wife. This suited the tenants admirably : they paid neither. Never were such times till the old woman applied for ejectment orders wholesale. While these things were going on the youthful husband wasted her substance in riotous living, and showed a decided preference for younger women. This aroused the old woman's jealousy ; she couldn't put up with it. Packing her jewels and valuables in a portmanteau, she left her house. When her husband returned at night the wife of his bosom was gone ; neither did she return. He was disconsolate, and sought her sorrowing. Some miles away she had a poor widowed sister, and there the old woman found shelter.

But there paralysis seized her, and a doctor had to be called in. He acted in the double capacity of doctor and lawyer, for he drew up a will, put a pen into her hands, and guided her gently while she signed it. "All her worldly goods were left to her sister." Ultimately the husband found out where she was located, and frequently called at the house, but the door was barred against him. It was winter-time, and the snow lay on the ground. At midnight a cab drew softly up to the house where the old woman lay. Suddenly there was a loud knock at the door, and the sister came down

to answer. Thoughtlessly she opened the door, when she was seized by two men, who locked her in the front parlour while they ran upstairs, rolled the old woman in warm blankets, carried her to the cab, and away they went. A nice room and another doctor were awaiting her. Another will was drawn up, which the old woman signed. "All her worldly goods were left to her dear husband." Next morning the sister applied for a summons against the young husband, but the magistrate decided that the man had a right to run away with his own wife. All might have gone merrily for the husband, but the old lady died. The sister went to the police, who arrested him for causing his wife's death. For many days the case was before the court, half a dozen doctors on each side expressing very decided opinions. Ultimately he was committed for trial. Doctors and counsel galore were concerned, but the jury acquitted him at last. And then came another trial. Counsel and doctors were again concerned. Which will was to stand ? I don't know how they settled it, but one thing I am sure about—when the doctors and lawyers had got their share, and the counsel had had a good picking, there was not much left for the loving husband and the dear sister.

Since writing the above, the following paragraphs have appeared in the daily press :

"WIDOWER'S PATHETIC PLIGHT.

" ' My wife is lying dead in the house, and the landlord threatens to eject me at twelve o'clock if I am not out. What can I do ?' Thus asked a respectable-looking working man of Mr. d'Eyn-

court at Clerkenwell Police-Court. ‘Has he given you notice?’ ‘Yes; but how can I go just now? The funeral is to-morrow, and I have offered to go on Wednesday, but he says he will put me in the street to-day.’ ‘Well, he’s legally entitled to do so, I am afraid. I can do nothing.’ ‘I thought that perhaps you might ask him to let me stay for a day or two.’ ‘No, that is a matter for you. I cannot interfere,’ the magistrate observed in conclusion.”

“LONDON LAND WITHOUT AN OWNER.

“Mr. H. Sherwin White requested Mr. Marsham at Bow Street Police-Court to appoint someone under the Lands Clauses Consolidation Act to determine the value of the forecourts of five houses in Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, which had been required for tramway purposes. He added that the owner of the houses could not be found. Mr. Marsham appointed Mr. A. L. Guy to be valuer.”

CHAPTER IX

THE HOOLIGANISM OF THE POOR

PRESENT-DAY excitements have killed the "hooligan" scare. Good nervous people now sleep comfortably in their beds, for the cry of "The hooligans! the hooligans!" is no longer heard in our land. Yet, truth to tell, the evil is greater now than when sensational writers boomed it. It grows, and will continue to grow, until the conditions that produce it are seriously tackled by the State. I must confine myself to the hooliganism of the poor. Of the hooliganism of undergraduates, medical students, stockbrokers, and politicians I say nothing. Of Tommy Atkins on furlough or of Jack ashore I wish to be equally silent. But of the class, born and bred in London slums, who do no regular work, but who seem to live on idleness and disorder, I desire to speak plainly—plainly, too, as to the conditions that are largely responsible for the disorderly conduct of the rising youth.

A large number of undoubtedly good people think it is easy to cure by punitive methods. I do not. "A policeman behind every lamp-post and the lash — the lash!" cried a notable

divine during a never-to-be-forgotten week when he edited an evening paper. Such was his recipe ! For months the cat with nine tails was a favourite theme, and all sorts of people caught the infection, and there was a great cry and commotion raised and sustained by a sensational but altogether inaccurate press. Every assault committed by a labouring man, every bit of disorder in the streets, if caused by the poor and ignorant, was a signal for the cry "The hooligan again !" Rubbish ! But the people believed it, and so to some extent our level-headed and kind-hearted magistrates caught the spirit of the thing, and proceeded to impose heavier sentences on boys charged with disorderly conduct in the streets. But this was not enough, for the Home Secretary (Mr. Ritchie) in the House of Commons, in reply to a question about youthful hooligans, said it was thought that the magistrates had been too lenient with them, and stated that the police had orders to charge those young gentlemen on indictment, so that they might not be dealt with summarily, but committed for trial. In other words, they were to take from the magistrates the power of so-called lenient punishment, and have them tried by judge and jury. Very good, but what good longer terms of imprisonment would do, the Home Secretary did not say ; and as to the magistrates, they can be severe enough, though they do know when to be lenient, and in aggravated cases they already commit for trial.

Profoundly I wish that all Home Secretaries would exercise their minds on the causes that lead to youthful hooliganism, and do something to

remove them. It were better far than taking steps to secure more severe punishment. Such talk to me seems callous and cruel, for punitive methods will never eradicate the instincts that lead to disorderly conduct in the streets among the "young gentry" of the poor. I must confess to a feeling of discomfort when I see a boy of sixteen sent to a month's imprisonment for disorderly conduct in the streets. It is true that he has been a nuisance to his elders, and has bumped against them in running after his pals. Equally true that he uses language repulsive to ears polite; but to him it is ordinary language, to which he has been accustomed his life through. But I am afraid it is equally true that similar offences committed by others in a better position would be more leniently dealt with. Would anyone suggest that a public-school boy, or a soldier on furlough, or a young doctor, or an enthusiastic patriot, should be committed for trial on a like charge? I trow not. Allowances are made, and it is right they should be made. I claim these allowances for the poor and the children of the poor.

Moreover, if these "young gentry" are to be consigned in wholesale fashion to prison, will it lessen the evil? I think not. On the contrary, it will largely increase it. Some of them will have lost the moderate respectability that stood for them in place of character; many of them will lose their work, and will join the increasing army of loafers; but all of them will lose their fear of prison, that fear of the unknown that is the greatest deterrent from crime and disorder. Familiarize these "young gentry" with prison,

and it is all over with them. The sense of fear will depart, and to a dead certainty more serious disorder and grosser crime will follow. Undoubtedly many of them will find prison quarters preferable to their own homes, and though they may resent the loss of liberty, they will find some comfort in the fact that they do not have to share with four others an apology for a bed, fixed in an apology for a room, of which the door cannot be opened fully because the bedstead prevents it.

If our law-makers, our notable divines, and our good but nervous people had to live under such conditions, I venture to say they would rush into the streets for change of air ; and if any steam were left in them, who can doubt but that they would let it off somehow ? Under present conditions, the “young gentry” have the choice of two evils —either to stay in their insufferable homes or to kick up their heels in the streets. But this includes two other contingencies—either to become dull-eyed, weak-chested, slow-witted degenerates, or hooligans. Of the two, I prefer the latter. The streets are the playgrounds of the poor, and the State has need to be thankful, in spite of the drawback in disorder and crime, for the strength and manhood developed in them. It will be a sorry day for England when the children of the poor, after being dragooned to school, are dragooned from the streets into the overcrowded tenements called home. Multiply large towns, run the “blocks” for the poor up to the skies, increase the pains and penalties for youthful disorder, and omit to make provision for healthy, vigorous, competitive play : then we may write “Ichabod”

over England, for its glory and strength will be doomed. Wealth may accumulate, but men will decay. Robust play, even though it be rough, is an absolute condition of physical and moral health.

Consider briefly how the poor live. Thousands of families with three small rooms for each family, tens of thousands with two small rooms, a hundred thousand with one room. And such rooms ! Better call them boxes. Dining-room and bedroom, kitchen and scullery, coal-house and drawing-room, workshop and wash-house, all in one. Here, one after another, the children are born ; here, one after another, many of them die. I went into one of these "combines," and saw an infant but a few days old with its mother on a little bed ; in another corner, in a box, lay the body of another child of less than two years, cold and still. I felt ill, but I also felt hot. I protest it is no wonder that our boys and girls seek the excitement of the streets, or that they find comfort in "dustbins." What can big lads of this description do in such surroundings ? Curl up and die, or go out and kick somebody. The pity of it is that they always kick the wrong person, but that's no wonder. Tread our narrow streets, where two-storied houses stand flush with the pavements ; explore our courts, alleys, and places ; climb skyward in our much-belauded dwellings ; or come even into our streets that look snugly respectable. You will find them teeming with juvenile life that has learned its first steps in the streets, got its first idea of play in the gutter, and picked up its knowledge of the vulgar tongue from those who have graduated in a gutter school. Is it any

wonder that young people developed under these conditions look upon the streets as their natural right, and become oblivious to the rights of others ? They are but paying back what they have received. Neither is it to be wondered at that as they grow older they grow more disorderly and violent, but altogether less scrupulous. It is absurd to suppose that boys who have grown into young men under these conditions will, on reaching manhood, develop staid and orderly ways, and equally absurd to suppose that by sending them for " trial " they will be made orderly.

Let us have less talk of punishment and more of remedy ; and the remedy lies, not with private individuals, but with the community. The community must bear the cost or pay the penalty. Oxford and Cambridge contend in healthy rivalry on the river, and the world is excited. Eton plays Harrow at cricket, and society is greatly moved. A few horses race at Epsom, and the people generally go wild. But when the Hackney boys contend with the boys of Bethnal Green, why, that's another tale. But they cannot go to Lord's or to Putney, so perforce they meet in the places natural to them—the streets. "But they use belts !" Well, they have no boxing-gloves, and it may comfort some folks to know that generally they use the belts upon each other. The major part of so-called youthful hooliganism is but the natural instinct of English boys finding for itself an outlet—a bad outlet it may be, but, mind you, the only outlet possible, though it is bound to grow into lawlessness if suitable provision is not made for its legitimate exercise.

At the close of one of my prison lectures, among the prisoners that asked for a private interview was an undersized youth of nineteen, a typical Cockney, sharp and cheeky as a London sparrow. He put out his hand and said, "How do you do, Mr. Holmes?" looking up at me. I shook hands with him, and said: "What are you doing here?" "Burglary, Mr. Holmes," he said. "Burglary?" I said—"burglary? I am sure God never intended you for a burglar." Looking up sharply, he said: "No, He would have made me bigger, wouldn't He? But I have had enough of prison," he said—"I've had enough. I'm going straight when I get out, and I shall be out in three weeks. It is very good of you to come and talk to us, and I am glad to know about all those men you have told us of; but I've come to see you because I want you to tell me how I am to spend my spare time when I am out. I am going back home to live. I've got a job to go to—not much wages, though. I shall live in Hoxton, and I want to go straight. If I get some books and read about those fellows you talked of, I can't read at home—there's no room. If I go to the library I feel a bit sleepy when I've been in a bit, and the caretaker comes along and he gives me a nudge, and he says: 'Waken up! This ain't a lodging-house.' We have no cricket or football. There's the streets for me in my spare time, and then I'm in mischief. Now, you tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

Municipal playgrounds are absolutely necessary if our young people are to be healthy and law-abiding. Of parks we have enough at present.

Our so-called recreation-grounds are a delusion and a snare, though to some they are doubtless a boon, with their asphalted walks, a few seats, and a drinking-fountain. They are very good for the very old and the very young ; but if Tom, Dick, and Harry essayed a game of rounders, tip-cat, leap-frog, or skittles, why, then they would soon find themselves before the magistrate, and be the cause of many paragraphs on youthful hooliganism in the next day's papers. Now, private philanthropy and individual effort is not equal to the task—and, in spite of increasing effort and enlarged funds, never will be equal to the task—of finding suitable recreation for our growing youth. I know well the great good done by our public-school and other missions, with their boys' clubs, etc. ; but they scarcely touch the evil, and they certainly have not the means of providing winter and summer outdoor competitive games. Every parish must have its public playground, under proper supervision, lit up with electric light in the evening, and open till 10 p.m. Here such inexpensive games as rounders, skittles, tip-cat, tug-of-war, might be organized, and Hackney might have a series of competitions with Bethnal Green, for the competitive element must be provided for. A series of contests of this sort would soon empty our streets of the lads who are now so troublesome. I venture to say that a tournament, even at “coddem” or “shove-ha’penny” alone, would attract hundreds of them, and certainly an organized competition of “pitch - and - toss” would attract thousands. Counters might be used instead of coins, and they would last for ever.

The fact is, that these youths are easily pleased, if we go the right way to work ; but we must take them as they are, and must not expect them all to play chess, billiards, and cricket. Football, I think, I would certainly add, for it is a game which any healthy boy can play, and it gives him robust exercise. Give the lads of our slums and congested dwellings a chance of healthy rivalry and vigorous competition, and, my word for it, they won't want to crack the heads either of their companions or the public. The public are not aware of the intense longing of the slum youth for active, robust play. During last year more than fifty boys were summoned at one court for playing football in the streets and fined, though in some cases their footballs were old newspapers tied round with string. Hundreds of youths are charged every year at each of our London police-courts with gambling by playing a game with bronze coins called "pitch-and-toss." Now, these youths do not want and long for each other's coins, but they do want a game, and if they could play all day and win nothing they would consider it an ideal game. Organized games in public playgrounds, creating local and friendly rivalry, are absolutely essential. The same feeling, developed but a trifle further, becomes national, and we call it patriotism. Play they must, or become loafers ; and the round-shouldered, dull-eyed loafer is altogether more hopeless than the hooligan.

It will be an inestimable blessing to the country, and will inaugurate quite a new era for us, when the minimum age for leaving school is raised to

sixteen. The increase of intelligence, physique and morality, and order arising from such a course would astonish the nation. Supposing this were done, and for boys and girls of over twelve two hours in the afternoon were set apart for games—in separate playgrounds, of course—and that the evenings were devoted to school-work. The younger children going to school in the afternoon might easily have their turn in the public playgrounds from five to seven. This would allow the youths over sixteen to have the playgrounds for the rest of the evening. But, having provided for play, I would go one step further, and not allow any boy to leave school till he produced satisfactory evidence that he was really commencing work. Hundreds of boys leave school having no immediate prospect of regular work. A few weeks' idleness and the enjoyment of the streets follow, and they are then in that state of mind and body that renders them completely indifferent to work of any kind. For good or for evil, the old system of apprenticing boys has gone. It had many faults, but it had some virtues, for, at any rate, it ensured a boy's continuity of work in those years when undisciplined idleness is certain to be demoralizing. Once let boys from the homes I have described—or, indeed, from working men's homes generally—be released from the discipline of school, and the discipline of reasonable and continuous work not be substituted, and it is all over with them and honest aspirations. Now, this difficulty of finding decent and prospective employment for boys is another great factor in the production of

youthful hooligans, but a factor that would be largely eliminated if the age for leaving school were raised to sixteen. The work of errand-boys, van-boys, or "cock-horse" boys is not progressive; neither is it good training for growing boys. To the boys of fourteen such work has its allurements, and the wages offered seem fairly good; but when the boy of fourteen has become the youth of sixteen or seventeen, the work seems childish, and the pay becomes mean. When he requires better wages, his services are dispensed with, and another lad of fourteen is taken on. This procedure alone accounts for thousands of youths being idle upon the streets of London. What can such youths do? Too big for their previous occupation, no skilled training or aptitude for better work, not big or strong enough for ordinary labouring, they become the despair of their parents and pests to society. Very soon the door of the parental home is closed upon them; the cheap lodging-houses become their shelter, and the rest can easily be imagined—but it lasts for life. By raising the school age, the great bulk of this demoralization would be prevented. Technical training in their school years would give these youths a certain amount of aptitude and taste that would enable them to commence life under more favourable conditions, and though many of them would necessarily become errand-boys or van-boys, still, the age at which they would leave those occupations would find them nearer manhood, and in possession of greater strength and more judgment than they can claim at the present age of leaving such work.

The step I am advocating would also remove another great cause of lifelong misery and its accompanying hooliganism. Look again, if you please, at the homes of the poor. Is it any wonder that when a youth finds himself earning twelve shillings a week, and has arrived at the mature age of eighteen, he enters into a certain relationship with a girl of seventeen, who has a weekly income of six shillings ? This relationship may or may not be sanctioned by the law and blessed by the Church ; in either case it is equally immoral, and the effects are equally blighting. How can healthy, virtuous, and orderly children come from such unions ?

Give the youth of our large towns a lengthened school-training, but at the same time remember that athletic and technical training must form part of that life ; let healthy rivalry have a chance of animating them and a feeling of manly joy sometimes pervade them, and these horrible, wicked juvenile unions will be heard of no more ; for at present their only chances of enjoyment are the streets, sexuality, or the public-house.

This last word leads me to another cause of hooliganism. The public-house is bound up with the lives of the poor. To many it stands, doubtless, for enjoyment and relaxation, for forgetfulness of misery and discomfort, and for sociability. To many others it stands for poverty, suffering, unspeakable sorrow, and gross neglect. Where our streets are the narrowest, where the sanitary arrangements are of the most execrable description, there the public-house thrives, and thrives with disastrous effects. The home-life of

the poor and the public-house act and react on each other. The more miserable the home and the greater the dirt, the more the public-house attracts ; the more it attracts, the viler the home-life and the greater misery and dirt. It is no marvel that people who live thus demand fiery drinks ; nor is it any great marvel that all the tricks of science and all the resources of civilization are brought to bear in manufacturing drinks for them. No wonder, when “ the vitriol madness flushes in the ruffian’s head,” that “ the filthy by-lane rings with the yell of the trampled wife.” But the State shares the profits and the State shares the guilt. Long ago Cowper wrote :

“ Drink and be mad, then—’tis your country bids :
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.”

The State does not care very much what compounds are served to the poor so long as the sacred revenue is not defrauded. But the State cannot escape the penalties. What of the offspring that issue from these homes and these neighbourhoods ? They have daily seen women with battered faces ; they have frequently seen the brutal kick, and heard the frightful curse ; they have been used to the public-house from their infancy ; whilst boys and girls have been allowed to join openly, and as a matter of course, in the carousals, and stand shoulder to shoulder in the bar and drink with seasoned topers. In the evening, when half drunk, they patrol the streets or stand together at some congested corner. They are not amenable to the influence of the police ; they are locked up, and the cry

"The hooligans ! the hooligans !" is heard in the land ; and there is a demand for more punishment, instead of a feeling of shame at the conditions that produce such young people and at the temptations that prevail amongst them. Can it be right—is it decent or wise ?—that boys and girls of sixteen should be allowed free access to public-houses, with free liberty to drink at will ? What can be expected but ribaldry, indecency, disorder, and violence ? A wise Government would protect these young people against temptation and against themselves. No improvement in the morals and conduct of the young is possible until this question is tackled, and there ought to be no difficulty about tackling it. Let the Home Secretary bring in a Bill, and pass it, making it illegal for boys and girls under twenty to drink on licensed premises, and he will do more good for public order than if he committed the whole of the young gentry for trial.

But I would put in also a plea for their parents. It is evident that we must have public-houses ; it is also certain that the public have a taste for, and demand, malt liquors and other alcoholic drinks. Now, the State reaps many millions of its revenue from this demand. It is therefore the duty of the State to see that these drinks are as harmless as possible. Let the State, then, insist upon the absolute purity of malt liquors, and also upon a reduction in their alcoholic strength ; for, after all, this is the cause of the mischief. In this direction lies the true path of temperance reform. Supposing the alcoholic strength of malt liquors—really malt liquors—

was fixed by imperial statute at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. by volume, who would be a penny the worse ? The brewer and the publican would get their profits, the Exchequer would get its pound of flesh, the Englishman would get his beer—his “glorious beer !” No vested interests would be attacked, and no disorganization of trade would be caused ; everybody concerned would be the better, for everybody would be the happier. It may be thought that I am getting wide of my subject, but even a superficial inquiry will soon lead anyone to the knowledge that the public-house is intimately connected with, and a direct cause of, what is termed “ hooliganism.”

Alcohol, not the house, is really the cause. To leave the house still popular, while largely taking away its dangerous element, would be a wise course ; but this should be followed by a much higher duty on spirits and a law fixing the maximum of their alcoholic strength when offered for public sale. Fifty per cent. under proof for spirits and an alcoholic strength of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for malt liquors would usher in the millennium.

To sum up what I conceive to be the reforms necessary to the abatement and cure of hooliganism :

1. Fair rents for the poor, and a fair chance of cleanliness and decency.
2. Municipal playgrounds and organized competitive games.
3. Extension of school-life till sixteen.
4. Prohibition to young people of alcoholic drinks for consumption on the premises.
5. Limitation by law of the alcoholic strength

of malt liquor to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and of spirits to 50 per cent. under proof, with higher duty.

Give us reforms on these lines, and there will be no "complaining in our streets." The poorest of the poor, though lacking riches, will know something of the wealth of the mind, for chivalry and manhood, gentleness and true womanhood, will be their characteristics. The rounded limbs and happy hearts of "glorious childhood" will be no longer a dream or a fiction. No longer will the bitter cry be raised of "too old" when the fortieth birthday has passed, for men will be in their full manhood at sixty. Give us these reforms, and enable the poor to live in clean and sweet content, then their sons shall be strong in body and mind to fight our battles, to people our colonies, and to hand down to future ages a goodly heritage. But there is a content born of indifference, of apathy, of despair. There is the possibility that the wretched may become so perfect in their misery that a wish for better things and aspirations after a higher life may die a death from which there is no resurrection. From apathetic content may God deliver the poor! from such possibilities may wise laws protect them! "Righteousness"—right doing—"exalteth a nation;" and a nation whose poor are content because they can live in cleanliness, decency, and virtue, where brave boyhood and sweet girlhood can bud, blossom, and mature, is a nation that will dwell long in the land, and among whom the doings of the hooligans will be no longer remembered.

CHAPTER X

THE HEROISM OF THE SLUMS

IN our narrow streets, in our courts and alleys, where the air makes one sick and faint, where the houses are rotten and tottering, where humanity is crowded and congested, where the children graduate in the gutter—there the heights and depths of humanity can be sounded, for there the very extremes of human character stand in striking contrast. Could the odorous canals that intersect our narrow streets speak, they would tell of many a dark deed, but, thank God ! of many a brave deed also. Numbers of “unfortunates,” weary of life, in the darkness of night, and in the horror of a London fog, have sought oblivion in those thick and poisonous waters. Men, too, weary from the heart-breaking and ceaseless search after employment, and widows broken with hard work, endless toil, and semi-starvation, have sought their doom where the water lies still and deep.

THE HERO WITH THE LAVENDER SUIT.

Often in the fog the splash has been heard, but no sooner heard than cries of “Let me die !” “Help ! help !” have also risen on the midnight

air. One rough fellow of my acquaintance has saved six would-be suicides from the basin of one canal, and on each occasion he has appeared to give evidence in a police-court. Five times he had given his evidence and quietly and quickly disappeared, but on the sixth occasion he waited about the court for an opportunity of speaking to the magistrate. This was at length given him, when he stated that he thought it about time someone paid him for the loss he sustained in saving these people from the canal. This was the sixth time he had attended a police-court to give evidence, and each time he had lost a day's pay. He did not mind that so very much, as it was but the loss of four shillings at intervals ; but this time he had on a new suit, which cost him thirty shillings. He had thrown off his coat and vest before jumping into the water, and someone had stolen them ; the dirty water had spoiled his trousers, which he had dried and put on for his Worship to see. The magistrate inspected the garments. They had been originally of that cheap material that costers affect, and of a bright lavender colour. He had jumped into an unusually nasty piece of water. Some tar and other chemicals had been moving on its surface, and his lavender clothes had received full benefit therefrom. The garments had been tight-fitting at the first, but now, after immersion and drying, they were ridiculously small. Even the magistrate had to smile, but he ordered the brave fellow to receive five shillings for expenses and loss of day's work, and ten shillings compensation for damage to his clothing. He looked ruefully at his ruined

clothes and at the fifteen shillings in his hand, and went out of the court. I went to speak to him. "Look here, Mr. Holmes," he said, "fifteen shillings won't buy me a new lavender suit. The next blooming woman that jumps in the canal 'll have to stop there ; I've had enough of this." I made up the cost of a suit by adding to his fifteen shillings, and he went away to get one. But I know perfectly well that, whether he had on a new lavender suit or an old corduroy, it would be all the same to him—into the canal, river, or any other water, he would go instinctively when he heard the heavy splash in the darkness or fog.

AN AMUSING RESCUE.

An amusing episode occurred with regard to a would-be suicide in the early part of one winter. A strong, athletic fellow, who had been a teacher of swimming at one of the London public baths, but who had lost position, had become homeless, and was quite on the down-grade. Half drunk, he found himself on the banks of the Lea, where the water was deep and the tide strong. Suddenly he called out, "I'll drown myself !" and into the water he went. The vagabond could not have drowned had he wished, for he was as much at home in the water as a rat. It was a moonlight night, and a party of men from Hoxton had come for a walk and a drink. One was a little fellow, well known in the boxing-ring. He also could swim a little, but not much. He heard the cry and the splash, and saw the body of the man lying still on the water. In he went, swam to the

body, and took hold of it. Suddenly there was a great commotion, for the little man had received a violent blow in the face from the supposed suicide. A fight ensued, but the swimmer held a great advantage over the boxer.

A boat arrived on the scene, and both were brought ashore exhausted. The swimmer recovered first, and was for making off, but was detained by the friends of the boxer, who, being recovered, walked promptly up to the big man and proposed a fight to the finish. This was accepted, but the little man was now in his element, and the big man soon had reason to know it. After a severe handling, he was given into custody for attempted suicide and assault, and appeared next day in the police-court, with cuts and bruises all over his face. The charge of attempted suicide was dismissed, but the magistrate fined him twenty shillings for assault. "Look at my face." "Yes," said the magistrate; "you deserve all that, and a month beside."

I give these examples of manly pluck to show that, in spite of all the demoralizing influence of slum life, and in spite of all the decay of manhood that must ensue from the terrible conditions that prevail, physical courage still exists among those born and bred in the slums, under the worst conditions of London life.

MORE SLUM HEROES.

But higher kinds of courage are also manifested. Who can excel the people of our slums in true heroism? None! If I want to find someone that

satisfies my ideal of what a hero should be, down into the Inferno of the slums I go to seek him or her. It is no difficult search ; they are to hand, and I know where to light on them. The faces of my heroes may be old and wrinkled, their arms may be skinny, and their bodies enfeebled ; they may be racked with perpetual pain, and live in dire but reticent poverty ; they may be working endless hours for three halfpence per hour, or lie waiting and hoping for death ; they may be male or they may be female, for heroes are of no sex ; but for examples of high moral courage—a courage that bids them suffer and be strong—come with me to the slums of London and see.

And how splendidly some of our poor widows' boys rise to their duties ! What pluck, endurance, and enterprise they exhibit ! Hundreds of such boys, winter and summer alike, rise about half-past four, are at the local dairy at five ; they help to push milk-barrows till eight ; and with a piece of bread and margarine off they go to school. After school-hours they are at the dairy again, washing the churns and milk-cans. Sharp-witted lads, too. They know how to watch their milk on a dark morning, and how to give evidence, too, when a thief is brought up. For supreme confidence in himself and an utter lack of self-consciousness or nervousness, commend me to these boys. They fear neither police nor magistrate. They are as fearless as they are natural ; for adversity and hard work give them some compensation. But their dangers and temptations are many. So I love to think of the lads who have stood the test and have not yielded. I love

to think of the gladness of the widow's heart and her pride in the growing manliness of her boy—"So like his father."

I was visiting in the heart of Alsatia, and sat beside the bed of a dying youth whose twenty-first birthday had not arrived—which never did arrive. It was but a poor room, not over-clean. From the next room came the sound of a sewing-machine driven furiously, for a widow by its aid was seeking the salvation of herself and children. She was the landlady, and "let off" the upper part of the house. The dying youth was not her son ; he belonged to the people upstairs. But the people upstairs were not of much account, for they spent their time largely away from home, and had scant care for their dying son ; so the widow had brought his pallet-bed into the little room on the ground-floor wherein I sat, "that I might have an eye on him." There must have been some sterling qualities in the woman, though she was not much to look upon, was poorly clad, and wore a coarse apron over the front of her dress. Her hands were marked with toil and discoloured by leather, for she machined the uppers of women's and children's boots, and the smell of the leather was upon her ; but she had a big heart, and though every time "she had an eye on him" meant ceasing her work and prolonging her labour, she could not keep away from him for long periods. But, my ! how she did make that machine fly when she got back to it ! Blessings on her motherly heart ! There was no furniture in the room saving the little box and the chair I occupied. The ceiling was frightfully

discoloured, and the walls had not been cleaned for many a day. But a number of oil-paintings without frames were tacked on the walls, and these attracted my attention. Some were very crude, and others seemed to me to be good, so I examined them. They bore no name, but evidently they had been done by the same hand. Each picture bore a date, and by comparing them I could mark the progress of the artist. As I stood looking at them, forgetful of the dying youth below me, I said, half to myself : "I wonder who painted these." An unexpected and weak reply came from the bed : "The landlady's son." My interest was increased. "How old is he?" "About twenty." "What does he do?" "He works at a boot factory"; adding painfully : "He went back to work after having his dinner just before you came in." "Why," I said, after again examining the dates on the pictures, "he has been painting pictures for six years." "Yes. He goes to a school of art now after he has done his work." The youth began to cough, so I raised him up a little; but the landlady had heard him, and almost forestalled me. This gave me the opportunity I wanted, for when the youth was easier, I said to her : "You have an artist son, I see," pointing to the pictures. "Yes," she said ; "his father did a bit." "How long has he been dead?" "Over seven years. I was left with four of them. My eldest is the painter." "What was your husband?" "A shoemaker." "How long have you lived here?" "Ever since I was married ; I have kept the house on since his death." "Any other of your children paint?"

"The youngest boy does a bit, but he is only thirteen." "Have you any framed pictures?" "No ; we cannot afford frames, but we shall, after a time, when he gets more money and the other boy goes out to work." "You are very good to this poor youth." "Well, I'm a mother. I must be good to him. I wish that I could do more for him." I never saw the consumptive lad again, for he died from haemorrhage the next day.

Some years afterwards I thought of the widow and her artist son, and being in the neighbourhood, I called at the house. She was still there, still making the machine fly. I inquired after her painter son. "Oh, he is married, and has two children ; he lives just opposite." "What is he doing now ?" "He has some machines, and works at home ; his wife is a machinist too. They have three girls working for them." "I will step across and see him." "But you won't find him in : he goes out painting every day when it is fine." "Where has he gone to-day ?" "Somewhere up the river." "How can he do machining if he goes out painting every day ?" "He begins to work at five o'clock and goes on till nine o'clock, then cleans himself and goes off ; he works again at night for four or five hours. His wife and the girls work in the daytime. His wife is a rare help to him ; they are doing all right." "I suppose he has some framed pictures now ?" "Yes, lots of them ; but you come in and look at the room the poor lad died in." I went in, and truly there had been a transformation. The ceiling was spotless, the walls were nicely coloured, the room was simply

but nicely furnished, and there were some unframed pictures on the wall, but not those I had previously seen. "My youngest son has this room now ; those pictures are his."

"What does he work at ?" "Boots." "Does he go to a school of art ?" "Every night it is open." I bade the worthy woman good-day, telling her how I admired the pluck, perseverance, and talent of her boys, also adding that I felt sure that she had a great deal to do with it and their success. "Well," she said, "I have done my best for them, but they have been good lads." Done her best for them, and a splendid best it was ! Who else could have done so much for them ? Not all the rich patrons the world could furnish combined could have done one-half for them that the brave, kindly, simple boot-machining mother had done for them. She was better than a hero ; she was a true mother. She did her best !

But her sons were heroes indeed ; they were made of the right material. Birth had done something for them, although their parents were poor, and one departed early, leaving them to the mother, themselves, the slums, and the world. When I can see growing youths, surrounded by sordid misery and rampant vice, working on in poverty, withstanding every temptation to self-indulgence, framing no pictures till they can pay for them, whose artistic souls do not lead them to despise honest labour, whose poetic temperaments do not lead them to idleness and debt, when they are not ashamed of their boot-machining mother, I recognize them as heroes, and I don't care a rap whether they become great artists or not. They

are men, and brave men, too. I can imagine someone saying : "He ought not to have married ; he should have studied in Paris. Probably the world has lost a great artist." Perhaps it has, but it kept the man, and we have not too many of that stamp. Perhaps, after all, he did the right thing, for he got a good helpmate, and one who helped him to paint.

Genius is not so rare in the slums as superior people suppose, for one of our great artists, but lately dead, whose work all civilized countries delight to honour, played in a gutter of the near neighbourhood where the widow machinist lived, and climbed a lamp-post that he might get a furtive look into a school of art ; and he, too, married a poor woman.

A "FOSTER-MOTHER."

And what wonderful women many of our London girls are ! I often think of them as I have seen them in our slums, sometimes a little bit untidy and not over-clean ; but what splendid qualities they have !

They know their way about, nor are they afraid of work. Time and again I have seen them struggling under the weight of babies almost as big as themselves. I have watched them hand those babies to other girls whilst they had their game of hop-scotch ; and when those babies have showed any sign of discontent, I have seen the deputy-mother take the child again into her arms, and press it to her breast, and soothe it with all the naturalness of a real mother.

And when the mothers of those girls die, and a family of young children is left behind, what then ? Why, then they become real deputy-mothers, and splendidly rise to their position.

Brave little women ! How my heart has gone out to them as I have seen them trying to discharge their onerous duties ! I have seen a few years roll slowly by, and watched the deputy-mother arrive at budding womanhood, and then I have seen disaster again overtake her in the death of her father, leaving her in sole charge.

Such was the case with a poor girl that I knew well, though there was nothing of the slum-girl about Hettie Vizer. Born in the slums, she was a natural lady, refined and delicate, with bright dark eyes. She was a lily, but, alas ! a lily reared under the shade of the deadly upas-tree. When Hettie was fifteen her mother, after a lingering illness, died of consumption, and Hettie was left to "mother" five younger than herself. Bravely she did it, for she became a real mother to the children, and a companion to her father.

In Hoxton the houses are but small and the rooms but tiny ; the air cannot be considered invigorating ; so Hettie stood no chance from the first, and at a very early age she knew that the fell destroyer, Consumption, had marked her for his prey.

Weak, and suffering undauntedly, she went on with her task until her father's dead body lay in their little home, and then she became both father and mother to the family. Who can tell the story of her brave life ? The six children kept together ; several of them went out to work, and

brought week by week their slender earnings to swell the meagre exchequer. Who can tell the anxiety that came upon Hettie in the expenditure of that money, while consumption increased its hold upon her ?

Thank God the Home Workers' Aid Association was able, in some degree, to cheer and sustain her. Several times she went to the home by the sea, where the breath of God gave her some little renewal of life.

But the sorrowful day was only deferred ; it could not be prevented. At length she took to her bed, and household duties claimed her no more. A few days before her death I sat by her bedside, and I found that the King of Terrors had no terror for her. She was calm and fearless. To her brothers and sisters she talked about her approaching end, and made some suggestions for her funeral, and then, almost within sound of the Christmas bells, only twenty-one years of age, she passed "that bourne whence no traveller returns," and her heroic soul entered into its well-earned rest. And the five are left alone. Nay, not alone, for surely she will be with them still, and that to bless them. If not, her memory will be sanctified to them, and the sorrows and struggles they have endured together will not be without their compensations. "From every tear that sorrowing mortals shed o'er such young graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes, and the destroyer's path becomes a way of life to heaven."

It was my privilege to know her, and in my gallery of heroes she has a foremost place. Strong

men may do and dare and die. Firemen, colliers, lifeboatmen, may risk their lives to save others ; martyrs may face the flames, and prophets may undergo persecutions. Their deeds live, and their stories thrill us. But Hettie Vizer stands on a higher plane still : a slum-girl, but a lady ; a foster-mother, with a mother's love ; a child enduring poverty, hard work, bereavements, and burning consumption. But, rising triumphantly over them all, she listened to the bells of God as they rang her into that place where sorrows and sighing are no more.

And now her younger sister has succeeded her, for the home is still kept together, and every week their little budget is considered, as it was "when Hetty was alive."

I have elsewhere spoken of the patient courage shown by weak and elderly women, but I must again refer to it, for in my judgment there is no sphere of life wherein greater courage is exhibited. For it must be borne in mind that they are not sustained by hope. It may be said that there is a good deal of fatalism connected with their courage and endurance, and doubtless this is true ; but no one can deny their courage, endurance, and magnificent self-reliance. I have in my mind as I write some hundreds of women engaged in London home industries whose lives and struggles are known to me and who compel my veneration, so when courage is spoken of I like to think of them ; for though the circumstances under which they live and the wrong they suffer bring a terrible indict-

ment against us, no one can, no one shall, deny their possession of great courage, poor, weak, and elderly though they be.

Ay, it takes some courage to face day after day their life. I do not think that I am short of pluck, but I am quite certain that I should want to lie down and die were I submitted to lives such as theirs. Men with animal courage could not endure it, and I freely grant that even patient women ought not to endure it: perhaps, for the sake of future generations, it might be best for them to die rather than endure it.

But when I see them and know their circumstances, see their persistent endurance and their indomitable perseverance, I marvel ! And in spite of the oppression they suffer I know that these women are exhibiting qualities that the world sadly needs, and are showing a type of heroism for which the world is bound to be ultimately the better. Poor brave old women ! how I respect you ! I venerate you ! for the only hope that touches your heart is the hope that you may keep out of the workhouse, and be buried without parochial aid. Poor brave old women ! I never enter one of your rooms without at once realizing your brave struggle for existence. I never see you sitting at your everlasting machines without realizing your endless toil, and I never see your Industrial Life Assurance premium-book lying ready for the collector without realizing that the two pennies that are ready also are sorely needed for your food. Poor brave old souls ! how many times when your tea-canister has been quite empty, and 4.30 in the afternoon has come,

and the collector has not yet called, have you been tempted to spend those pennies and provide yourself with a cup of tea ? How many times have you picked up the pennies ? how many times have you put them down again ? for your horror of a parish funeral was too strong even for your love for a cup of tea ! Brave old women ! is there a stronger, more tragical, temptation than yours ? I know of none. Esau sold his birthright for a tasty morsel, well fed as he was ; but you will not surrender your “ death right ”—nay, not for a cup of tea, for you are made of better stuff than Esau. So you go without your tea ; but your burial money is not imperilled. Yes, it takes some moral courage to resist such a temptation ; but there is no glamour about it : the world knows not of it ; nevertheless, it is an act of stern self-repression, an act of true heroism. Shame upon us that it should be required ! glory to us that it is forthcoming ! What a life of heroism a poor woman has lived for that ten, twenty, or forty years, who, in spite of semi-starvation, has resisted the temptation to spend her burial money ! Those few pounds so hardly saved are as fragrant as the box of costly ointment poured upon the Master’s feet, and convey the same sentiment, too, for their brave old souls respect their poor old bodies, and against their day of burial they do it ! It may be a mean ambition, but of that I am by no means sure ; still, it is better than none, for poor, desolate, and God-forsaken must the old woman be who does not cherish it. Poorer still will the old women be, and more desolate their hearts, when this one ambition disappears, and they are heedless, apathetic, and

unconcerned as to how and where their poor old bodies are buried.

So the heroism of the slums is of the passive more than the active kind, of the "to be and to suffer" sort rather than of the "to do and dare." And it must needs be so, for opportunities of developing and exhibiting the courage that needs promptitude, dash, and daring have very largely been denied the people who live in our narrow streets. But their whole lives, circumstances, and environments have been such that patience under suffering, fortitude in poverty, and perseverance to the end could not fail to be developed. In these qualities, despite all their vices and coarseness, poor people, and especially poor women, set a splendid example to the more favoured portions of the community.

CHAPTER XI

A PENNYWORTH OF COAL

IT was winter-time, and the cold damp fog had fallen like a heavy cloud on East London. The pavements were grimy and greasy ; travelling, either on foot or by conveyance, was slow and dangerous. The voices of children were not heard in the streets, but ever and again the hoarse voice of some bewildered driver was heard asking his way, or expostulating with his horse. Occasionally a tell-tale cough came from some foot-passenger of whose proximity I had been unaware, but who, like myself, was slowly groping his way to a desired haven.

I found my objective at last, and I entered a queer room possessing two doors—one the ordinary street door ; the other, of which the upper part was glass, opened into an outhouse at a right angle with the house door. This annexe had once been a greengrocer's shop, and fronted a side-street ; now it was used as a coal and coke depot, and to it resorted the poor for their winter's supply of coal and coke.

The proprietor was ill, had been ailing for years, and now the shadows of eternity hovered around

him. It was afternoon, and he was resting. I sat talking with his wife, an elderly woman, who sat at a machine making a new pair of knickers out of an old garment for a neighbour who had many children, the while a girl waited to have a new frock made out of an old dress that had been purchased probably at a street causeway auction, when, "A penn'orth of coal, please, Mrs. Jenkins!" The voice came from the coal depot. Mrs. Jenkins got up from her machine. "John, can you come down and attend to the shop?" I heard a step on the bedroom floor above me, and presently John, weak and gasping, descended the stairs, passed through the little room and through the glass door, and served the pennyworth of coal; came back, and, delivering the penny to his wife, gasped his way upstairs again. "How much coal do you give for a penny?" I asked Mrs. Jenkins. "Six pounds." "Why, that is above one shilling and sixpence halfpenny per hundredweight—nearly thirty-two shillings per ton," I said. "Yes, sir, it is dear buying it by penn'orts, but I can't sell it any cheaper." "How much do you give for a ton?" I asked, for I had not then been in the coal depot, or I need not have asked. "Oh, sir, we never get a ton; I buy it by the hundredweight from the trolley-man, and give one and fourpence the hundredweight." "Do you get full weight from the trolley-man?" "Well, we don't get anything over; but the London County Council has looked after them so sharply that they dare not give us short weight now." "But there is some dirt and slack in every sack you buy." "Yes, but I burn that myself with a bit of coke." She

then continued : " I wish the poor people would always buy fourteen pounds." " Why ?" " Well, it would be better for them, you see ; we only charge them twopence farthing for fourteen pounds, so it comes cheaper to them." " Yes," I said, " they would save one ha'penny when they had bought eight lots of coal." " Yes, sir. I make just twopence on a hundredweight when they buy it like that." " No," I said, " you don't, for you cannot make eight complete lots out of one sack."

" Fourteen pounds of coal, please, Mrs. Jenkins !" Again a voice came from the depot. " John ! John !" Again John came wearily downstairs to weigh the coal. He returned with twopence halfpenny, which he handed to his wife, and said : " A farthing change."

Mrs. Jenkins searched her small pile of coppers, but failed to find a farthing. " Is it Mrs. Brown ?" she asked her husband. " Yes," was the reply. " Oh, then give her the halfpenny back, and tell her to owe me the farthing." John went into the shop, taking the halfpenny with him, and I heard a discussion going on, after which John returned with the coin, and said : " She won't take it." But Mrs. Brown followed him into the room with her fourteen pounds of coal in a small basket. " No, Mrs. Jenkins, I can't take it ; I owe you two farthings now. If you keep the ha'penny I shall only owe you one, and I'll try and pay that off next time." " Never mind what you owe me, Mrs. Brown ; you take the ha'penny. You have little children, and have no husband to work for

you like I have," was Mrs. Jenkins's reply. But Mrs. Brown was not to be put down, so after a protracted discussion the halfpenny remained in the possession of Mrs. Jenkins, and poor feeble John retired to rest.

I sat wondering at it all, quite lost in thought. Presently Mrs. Jenkins said : "I wish Mrs. Brown had taken that ha'penny." "Why?" I said. "Well, you see, she has little children who have no father, and they are so badly off." "But you are badly off, too. Your husband is ill, and ought to be in the hospital ; he is not fit to be about." "I rest him all I can, but this afternoon I have these knickers and frock to make ; that work pays better than coal when I can get it." "How much rent do you pay?" "Fifteen shillings and sixpence a week, but I let off seven and sixpence, so my rent comes to eight shillings." "But you lose your tenant sometimes, and the rooms are empty?" "Yes." "And sometimes you get a tenant that does not pay up?" "Yes." "And sometimes you allow poor women to have coal on credit, and you lose in that way?" "Yes," she said, and added slowly : "I wish I could have all that is owing to me." "Show me some of your debts." We went into the coal depot. "I have had to stop that woman," she said, pointing to a name and a lot of figures chalked up on a board. She owes me one and elevenpence farthing." I reckoned up the account. "Quite correct," I said.

"She had sixteen lots of coal for one and elevenpence farthing ; she can't pay me at all now, she is so far behind. I ought to have stopped her

before, but I did not like to be hard on her." Several other "chalked up" accounts confronted me—one for sixpence, another for ninepence—but that one and elevenpence farthing was the heaviest account. It was too pitiful; I could inquire no further.

The difficulty of obtaining even minute quantities of coal constitutes one of the great anxieties of the very poor, and exposes them to unimaginable suffering and hardship.

To poor old women with chilly bones and thin blood, who especially need the glow and warmth of a substantial fire, the lack of coal constitutes almost, and in many cases quite, tragedy.

The poorest class of home-workers, who require warmth if their fingers are to be nimble and their boxes or bags are to be dried, must have some sort of a fire, even if it be obtained at the expense of food. Small wonder, then, that their windows are seldom opened, for the heat of the room must not be dissipated; they must be thrifty in that respect. During the winter, generally in January, I set out on a tour of discovery, my object being to find out old widows who manage to keep themselves without parish relief, and get their little living by making common articles for everyday use. Formerly I experienced great difficulty in finding the brave old things; I have no difficulty now, for at a day's notice I can assemble five hundred self-supporting widows to whom a single hundred-weight of coal would loom so large that it would appear a veritable coal-mine.

So I ask my readers to accompany me on one

of these expeditions—in imagination, of course. Come, then, through this side-door, for it stands open, though not invitingly so, for the stairs are uncarpeted and dirty and the walls are crumbling and foul.

We pass the room on the ground-floor, and observe that it is half workshop and half retail-shop, for old furniture is renovated and placed in the shop-window for sale. Up one flight of unwashed stairs and past another workshop—this time a printer's. Up again ! The stairs are still narrow, and the walls are still crumbling, the stairs still unwashed. We pass another workshop, mount more stairs, and then we come to a small landing and some narrow, very narrow, stairs that are scrupulously clean, though innocent of carpet or linoleum.

We are now at the very top of the house and in semi-darkness, but we discover the door of the room we are looking for. On rapping, we are told to "Come in." It is a small attic, just large enough to contain a bed, a table, and a small chest of drawers.

She sat at the table underneath the dormer window, and was busy at work making paper bags : a widow alone in the world, seventy-eight years of age, who had never received one penny from the parish in her life. Take notice of the little bedroom grate. It is a very small one, but you notice it is made much smaller by two pieces of brick being placed in it, one on each side, and between them a very small fire is burning, or trying to burn. She tells us that she gets fivepence per thousand for her paper bags, and that she buys

her own paste ; that she works for her landlord, who stops her rent every week out of her earnings. She buys her coal by the quarter of a hundred-weight, which costs her fivepence ; she does not buy pennyworths. Sometimes the men below give her bits of wood, and the printer lets her have scraps of cardboard. She can't do with less than two quarters in the week, it is so cold, but she manages with a bit less in the summer-time. So the brave old woman gabbles on, telling us all we want to know. I produce some warm clothing, and her old eyes glisten ; I give her a whole pound of tea in a nice canister, and I think I see tears ; but I take her old skinny hand, all covered with paste, and say : " You must buy a whole hundredweight of good coal with that, or give it back to me ; you must not use it for anything else." Ah, this was indeed too much for her, and she burst out hysterically : " Oh, don't mock me—a hundredweight of coal ! I'll soon have those bricks out."

Come with me into another street. We have no stairs to climb this time, for the house consists of but two stories, and contains but four small rooms. We enter the front room on the ground-floor, and find three old women at work. There being no room or accommodation for us to sit, we stand just inside and watch them as they work. Two are widows bordering on seventy years of age ; the other is a spinster of like years. One sits at a machine sewing trousers, of which there is a pile waiting near her. As soon as she has completed her portion of work she passes the trousers on to the other widow, who finishes them—that

is, she puts on the buttons, sewing the hem round the bottom of the trousers, and does all the little jobs that must needs be done by hand. When her part of the work is completed, she passes the trousers on to the spinster, who has the heaviest part of the task, for she is the "presser," and manipulates the hot and heavy iron that plays such an important part in the work. Each of them occupies one of the four rooms in the house, but for working purposes they collaborate and use the widow machinist's room; for collaboration increases their earnings and lessens their expenses, for the one room is also used for the preparation and consumption of food. One kettle, one teapot, and one frying-pan do for the three. Old and weak as they are, they understand the value of co-operation and the advantages to be obtained by dividing labour. But they understand something else much better, for "one fire does for the three," and the fire that heats the iron warms the room for three, and boils the kettle for three. Talk about thrift! Was there ever seen that which could eclipse these three old women in the art and virtue of saving? Thrift and economy! Why, the three poor old souls fairly revelled in it. They could give points to any of the professional teachers of thrift who know so much about the extravagance of the poor. One gas-light served for the three, and when a shilling was required to gently induce the automatic gas-meter to supply them with another too brief supply of light, the shilling came from common funds; and when the long day's work was done, and the old widow machinist prepared to lie down in the little

bed that had been erstwhile covered with trousers, the other widow and aged spinster went aloft to their little rooms to light their little lamps and to count themselves happy if they possessed a bit of wood and a few crumbs of coal wherewith to make the morning fire. If not so fortunate, then, late and cold though the night be, they must sally forth to the nearest general shop, and with a few hardly-earned coppers lay in a fresh stock, and return laden with one pint of paraffin oil, one halfpennyworth of firewood, one pennyworth of coal, and most likely with one pennyworth of tea-dust. And in such course their lives will run till eyesight fails or exhausted nature gives way, and then the workhouse waits.

It is the old widow machinist that talks to us, but she keeps on working. Her machine whirrs and creaks and rattles, for it is an old one, and its vital parts are none too good ; and the old woman speaks to it sometimes as if it were a sentient thing, and reproves it when a difficulty arises. In her conversation with us frequent interjections are interposed that sometimes appeared uncomplimentary to us : "Now, stupid !" "Ah ! there you are at it again !" But when she explained that she was referring to her machine and not to us, we forgave her.

"I have had this machine for twenty-one years, and it has been a good one. I bought it out of my husband's club and insurance money." "How much did you have altogether ?" "Twenty pounds, and I paid for his funeral and bought my mourning and this machine, and it's been a friend to me ever since, so I can't help talking to it ;

but it wants a new shuttle." "How much will that cost?" "Five shillings!" "Let me buy one for you." "I don't want to part with the old one yet. It will perhaps last my time, for I want a new shuttle, too. We are both nearly worn out;" and the machinist kept on with her work, and the other widow with her finishing, and the aged spinster with her pressing.

Oh, brave old women ! We are lost in wonder and veneration. Utilitarians and the apostles of thrift tell us that the poor are demoralized by "charity," and of a surety indiscriminate giving without knowledge and personal service is often ill bestowed. But in the presence of three old women possessed of heroic souls, living as they lived, working as they worked, who cares for utilitarianism or political economy either ? A fig for the pair of them !

"But," say our teachers, "you are in reality subsidizing their employers, who exploit them and pay them insufficiently." Another self-appointed teacher says : "Ah ! but you are only helping them to pay exorbitant rents ; the landlord will profit." Who cares ? Others, in very comfortable circumstances, who themselves are by no means averse to receiving gifts, say : "Don't destroy the independence of the poor." Wisdom, prudence, political economy, go, hang yourselves ! we cry. Our love is appealed to, our hearts are touched, our veneration is kindled, and we must needs do something, though the landlord may profit, though the employer may be subsidized—nay, though we run the terrible risk of tarnishing the glorious privilege and record of these independent old

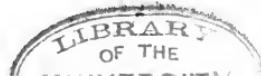
women—a record nearly completed. Help them we must, and we bid defiance to consequences. So we find the “trolley-man,” and three separate bags of good coal are borne into three separate rooms. A whole hundredweight for each woman ! Where could they put it all ? What an orgie of fire they would have ! Would the methodical thrift of the old women give way in the face of such a temptation ?

We don’t care : we have become hardened ; and we even promise ourselves that other bags of coal shall follow. Then we examine their tea-caddies, and throw this tea-dust on the fire—a fitting death for it, too—and further demoralize the ancient three with the gift of a pound of good tea, each in a nice cannister, too. A hundredweight of coal and a pound of tea ! Why, the teapot will be always in use till the pound is gone. The poor drink too much tea. Perhaps so ; but what are the poor to drink ? They have neither time, inclination, nor money for the public-house. Coffee is dear if it is to be good. Cocoa is thick and sickly. Water ! Their water !—ugh ! At present poor old women have the choice of tea or nothing. Then leave them, we beseech you, their teapot, but let us see to it that they have some decent tea. So, with five shillings in silver for each of them, we leave the dauntless three to their fire, their teapots, and wonder, and go into the streets with the feeling that something is wrong somewhere, but what it is and how to right it we know not.

I could, were it necessary, multiply experiences similar to the above, but they would only serve to prove, what I have already made ap-

parent, that the worries and sufferings of the very poor are greatly aggravated by their inability to procure a reasonable supply of coal. Slate-clubs, men's meetings, and brotherhoods have of late years done much to secure artisans and working men who are earning decent wages a supply of good coal all the year round. Weekly payments of one shilling and upwards enable them to lay in a store when coal is cheap—if it is ever cheap—or to have an arrangement with the coal merchant for the delivery of a specified amount every week. People possessed of commodious coal-cellars may buy largely when coal prices are at their lowest ; but the poor—the very poor—can neither buy nor store, for they have neither store-houses nor barns. Even if they could, by the exercise of great self-denial, manage to pay a sum of sixpence per week into a local coal-club, they have nowhere to put the supply when sent home to them. They must needs buy in very small quantities only. The advantages of co-operation are not for them, but are reserved for those that are better off. One scriptural injunction, at any rate, the community holds with grim tenacity : “To him that hath it shall be given.”

Yet I have seen attempts at co-operation among the poorest, for one Christmas-time, when the weather was terribly severe, and when, as becomes a Christian country, the one great necessity of life among the poor was put up to a fabulous price, I knew four families living in one house to contribute threepence per family wherewith to purchase fifty-six pounds of coal that they might



have extra fire at that happy season. Some of the very poor buy pennyworths of coke to mix with their coal, but though coke seems cheaper, it only flatters to deceive, for it demands greater draught, and it must be consumed in larger quantities. If for economy's sake a good draught and a generous supply be denied, it sullenly refuses to burn at all, and gives off fumes that might almost challenge those of a motor-car. The lives of many young children have been sacrificed by attempts to burn coke in small rooms where the draught necessary for good combustion has not existed. Certainly coke is no friend to the very poor. There are still meaner purchases of firing material than pennyworths of coal or pennyworths of coke, for half-pennyworths of cinders are by no means uncommon. A widow of my acquaintance who had several young children startled me one day when I was in her room by calling out, "Johnny, take the bucket and run for a ha'porth of cinders and a farthing bundle of wood." The farthing bundle of firewood I knew of old—and a fraudulent fellow I knew him to be, made up especially for widows and the unthrifty poor—but the half-pennyworth of cinders was a new item to me. I felt interested, and decided to remain till Johnny returned. He was not long away, for it was the dinner-hour, and the boy had to get back to school. He was but a little fellow, and by no means strong, yet he carried the bucket of cinders and firewood easily enough. When the boy had gone to school the widow turned to me as if apologizing for wasting three farthings. "I must have some fire for the children when they come

in." "Aren't you going to make the fire up for yourself? It will soon be out, and it is very cold to-day." "No; I am going to work hard, and the time soon goes. I shall light it again at half-past four," said the unthrifty widow. Meanwhile I had inspected the cinders, which I found to be more than half dirt, fit only for a dust-destructor, but certainly not fit to burn in a living-room. "Do you buy cinders by weight or measure?" "I think he measures them." "How much have you got here?" "Two quarts." "Do you see that quite half is dirt?" "They are dirty. I expect he has nearly sold out. When he has a fresh lot we get better cinders, for the small and the dirt get left till the last." "I suppose he will not have a fresh supply in till he has cleared the last?" "No; he likes to sell out first. One day when I complained about them he said: 'Ah! they are pretty bad. Never mind! the more you buy, the sooner they'll be gone; then we'll have a better lot.'" "How many fires will your cinders make?" "Two, if I put a bit of coal with them." "Do you ever buy a hundred-weight of coal?" "Not since my husband died. I try to buy a quarter twice a week." "How much do you give for a quarter?" "Five-pence." "How many fires can you light with your farthing bundle of wood?" "Two, if I don't use some of it to make the kettle boil." "How much rent do you pay?" "Five shillings for two rooms."

Poor widow! Because ye have not, even the little that ye have is of a truth taken from you.

CHAPTER XII

OLD BOOTS AND SHOES

ONE hundred pairs of old boots and shoes that have been cast off by the very poor present a deplorable sight—a sight that sets one thinking. Many times I have regretted that I did not call in a photographer before they were hurried off to the local dust-destructor. What a tale they told ! or rather what a series of tragedies they revealed ! There was a deeply pathetic look about every pair : they looked so woefully, so reproachfully, at me as I contemplated them. They seemed to voice not only their own sufferings, but also the wrongs and privations of the hundred poor widows who had discarded them ; for these widows, poor as they were, had cast them off. The boots and shoes seemed to know all about it, and to resent the slight inflicted on them ; henceforth even the shambling feet of poor old women were to know them no more. They had not a coy look among them ; not an atom of sauciness or independence could I discover ; but, crushed and battered, meek and humiliated, they lay side by side, knowing their days were over, and pitifully asking for prompt dissolution. What a

mixed lot they were ! No two pairs alike. Some of the couples were not pairs, for a freak of fortune had united odd boots in the bond of sufferings and the gall of poverty. Many of them had come down in life ; they had seen better days. Well-dressed women had at some time stepped daintily in them, but that was when the sheen of newness was upon them and the days of their youth were not ended. In those days the poor old boots were familiar with parks, squares, and gardens, and well-kept streets of the West ; but latterly they have only been too familiar with the slums and the grime of the East. How I wished they could speak and tell of the past ! How came it about that, after such a splendid beginning, they had come to such a deplorable end ? Had the West End lady died ? Had her wardrobe been sold to a dealer ? What had been the intermediate life of the boots before they were placed, patched and cobbled, in the dirty window of a fusty little second-hand shop in Hoxton ? I know the widow that bought them and something of her life ; I can appreciate the effort she made to get possession of them. She paid two shillings and sixpence for them, but not all at once—oh dear, no ! Week by week she carried threepence to the man who kept the fusty little shop. He cheerfully received her payments on account, meanwhile, of course, retaining possession of the coveted boots. It took her four months to pay for them, for her payments had not been quite regular. What would have become of the payments made if the widow had died before the completion of purchase, I need not say, but I am quite sure

the boots would have speedily reappeared in the shop window. But, after all, I am not sure that the old cobbler was any worse in his dealings with the poor than more respectable people are ; for pawnbroking, money-lending, life assurance, and furniture on the hire system among the poor are founded on exactly the same principles. How much property has been lost, how many policies have been forfeited, because poor people have been unable to keep up their payments, we do not know ; if we did, I am quite sure that it would prove a revelation. In this respect the thriftiness of the poor is other people's gain.

It was a triumph of pluck and grit, for at the end of four long months the widow received her cobbled boots. Her half-crown had been completed. "I had them two years ; they lasted me well—ever so much better than a cheap new pair," the widow told me ; nevertheless, she was glad to leave them behind and go home with her feet shod resplendently in a new pair of seven-and-elevenpenny. She might venture to lift the front of her old dress now as she crossed the street, and I am sure that she did not forget to do it, for she was still a woman, in spite of all, and had some of that quality left severe people call vanity, but which I like to think of as self-respect.

"How is it," I was asked by a critical lady, "that your poor women let their dresses drag on the pavement and crossings ? I never see any of them lift their dresses behind or in front. They must get very dirty and insanitary." "My dear madam," I replied, "they dare not, for neither their insteps nor their heels are presentable ;

but give them some new boots, and they will lift their dresses often enough and high enough."

There was another pair, too, that had come down, and they invited speculative thought. They were not born in the slums or fitted for the slums, but they came into a poor widow's possession nevertheless. They had not been patched or cobbled, and just enough of their former glory remained to allow of judgment being passed upon them. They had been purchased at a "jumble sale" for threepence, and were dear at the price. The feet that had originally worn them had doubtless trodden upon carpet, and rested luxuriantly upon expensive hearthrugs. They were shoes, if you please, with three straps across the insteps, high, fashionable heels, buckles and bows in front. But their high heels had disappeared, the buckles had long since departed, the instep straps were broken and dilapidated, the pointed toes were open, and the heels were worn down. When completely worn out and unmendable, some lady had sent them to a local clergyman for the benefit of the poor. I gazed on them, and then quite understood, not for the first time, that there is a kind of charity that demoralizes the poor, but it is a charity that is not once blessed.

Here was an old pair of "Plimsolls," whose rubber soles had long ago departed; there a pair of shoes that had done duty at the seaside, whose tops had originally been brown canvas, and whose soles had been presumably leather; here a pair of "lace-ups"; there a pair of "buttons"—but the lace-holes were all broken, and buttons were not to be seen.

But whatever their style and make had been, and whoever might have been their original wearers, they had now one common characteristic—that of utter and complete uselessness. I ought to have been disgusted with the old rubbish, but somehow the old things appealed to me, though they seemed to reproach me, and lay their social death to my charge and their present neglect to my interference. But gladness was mixed with pathos, for I knew that a hundred widows had gone to their homes decently booted on a dismal Christmas Eve.

But now, leaving the old boots to the fate that awaited them, I will tell of the women who had so recently possessed them.

It had long been a marvel to me how the very poor obtained boots of any sort and kind. I had learned so much of their lives and of their ways and means that I realized boots and shoes for elderly widows or young widows with children must be a serious matter. Accordingly, at this particular Christmas I issued, on behalf of the Home Workers' Aid Association, invitations to one hundred widows to my house, where each widow was to receive a new pair of boots and Christmas fare. They came, all of them, and as we kept open house all day, I had plenty of time to converse with them individually. I learned something that day, so I want to place faithfully before my readers some of the things that happened and some of the stories that were told.

One of the first to arrive was an elderly widow, accompanied by her epileptic daughter, aged thirty. I looked askance at the daughter, and

said to the widow : " I did not invite your daughter." " No, sir ; but I thought you would not mind her coming." " But I do mind, for if every widow brings a grown-up daughter to-day I shall have two hundred women instead of one hundred." " I am very sorry, sir ; but I could not come without her." They sat down to some food, and my wife looked up a few things for the daughter. " Now for the boots," I said. " Of course, we cannot give your daughter a pair." " No," said the widow ; " we only want one pair." I knew what was coming, for I had taken stock of the daughter, who was much bigger than her mother. " What size do you take ?" " Please, sir, can my daughter try them on ?" " No ; the boots are for you." " Oh yes, sir, they will be my boots, but please let my daughter try them on." It was too palpable, so I said : " Your daughter has bigger feet than you have." " Yes, sir." " And you want a pair that will fit either of you ?" " Yes, sir." " Then when you go out you will wear them ?" " Oh yes, sir." " And when your daughter goes out, she will wear them—in fact, you want a pair between you ?" " Yes, sir," the reply came eagerly from both. " Well, put your right feet forward." They did, and there was no doubt about it : mother and daughter both stood sadly in need, though they scarcely stood in boots ; no doubt, either, as to the relative sizes. The daughter required " nines " and the mother " fives." I gave them a note to a local shopkeeper, where the daughter was duly fitted, so they went away happy, because they jointly possessed a new pair of " seven-and-elevenpenny's."

But whether the widow ever wore them, I am more than doubtful. It is the self-denial of the very poor that touches me. It is so wonderful, so common, perhaps, that we do not notice it. It is so unobtrusive and so genuine. We never find poor widows jingling money-boxes in the streets and demanding public contributions because it is their "self-denial week." Their self-denial lasts through life, but the public are not informed of it. I fancy that I should have had an impossible task if I had asked, or tried to persuade, the widow to go into the streets and solicit help because she had denied herself a pair of boots for the sake of her afflicted daughter. Oh, it is very beautiful, but, alas! it is very sad. The poor couple worked at home in their one room when they had work to do and when the daughter's fits did not prevent. They made "ladies' belts," and starved at the occupation.

Another widow had four young children ; her feet were partly encased in a flimsy pair of broken patent slippers. She, too, had her note to the shoemaker's.

A deep snow fell during the night, and on the morning of Boxing Day it lay six inches deep. I thought of the widows and their sound boots, and felt comforted ; but my complacency soon vanished. I was out early in the streets, warmly clad, spurning the snow—in fact, rather enjoying it—and thinking, as I have said, with some pleasure of the widows and their boots, when I met the widow who has four young children. She was for hurrying past me, but I stopped her and spoke. "A bitter morning, this." "Yes, sir; is it not

a deep snow ?" "I am so glad you have sound boots. You had them just in time. Your old slippers would not have been of much use a morning like this." "No, sir." "Did you get what suited you ?" "Yes, sir." "Fit you all right?" "Yes, sir." "Did you have buttons or lace-up ?" "Lace-up, sir." "That's right. Lift up the front of your dress. I want to see whether the shopman has given you a good pair." She began to cry, and, to my astonishment, the old broken patent slippers were revealed, half buried in the snow. "Don't be cross," she burst out. "I did not mean to deceive you. I got two pairs for the children : they wanted them worse than I do."

I learned afterwards from the shopman that she added a shilling to the cost of a pair for herself, and the shopman, being kind-hearted, gave her another shilling, so she went home with her two pairs of strong boots for her boys. Of course, I told her that she had done wrong—I even professed to be angry ; but I think she saw through my pretence. What can be done for, or with, such women ? How can anyone help them when they are so deceitful ? However, I forgave her, and confirmed her in her wickedness by next day sending the shop assistant to her home with several pairs of women's boots that she might select a pair for herself. That kind of deceit has an attraction for me.

"How long have you been a widow ?" I asked one of the women. "Twelve years, sir." "How long is it since you had a new pair of boots ?" "Not since my husband's funeral, sir." Twelve

long years since she felt the glow of satisfaction that comes from the feeling of being well shod ; twelve years since she listened to the ringing sound of a firm heel in brisk contact with the pavement ; twelve years she had gone with that muffled, almost noiseless sound so peculiar to poor women, telling as it does of old slippers or of boots worn to the uppers ! What a pity, when so many shoemakers are seeking customers ! There is a tremendous moral force in a new pair of boots that possess good firm heels. Everybody that hears them knows instinctively what the sound means, and the neighbours say : "Mrs. Jones is getting on a bit: she is wearing a new pair of boots. Didn't you hear them ?"

Hear them ! Of course they had heard them, and had been jealous of them, too ; but that kind of music is not heard every day among London's very poor, and for a time Mrs. Jones was on a higher plane than her neighbours ; but by-and-by she comes back to them, for the heels wear away, and she has no others to put on whilst they are repaired, so gradually they slip down to the chronic condition of poor women's boots ; then Mrs. Jones's ringing footsteps are heard no more.

My shopman told me that he had been in a difficulty ; he could not find a pair of boots large enough for one young widow. He searched his store, and found a pair—size eleven—that he had had by him for some years ; but, alas ! size eleven was not big enough. He offered to procure a last of sufficient proportion and make a pair of boots for her, kindly saying that he would not charge anything extra for size. I told him to get

a proper last made for the young woman, who took "twelves." This he did, so now a poor blouse-maker, who keeps an aged and invalid mother, has her boots made to order, and built upon her own "special last." When I had made this arrangement, I was puzzled to know in what way she had previously obtained boots, so I asked him : "What boots was she wearing when she came to your shop ?" He laughed, and said : "A very old pair of men's tennis-shoes—of large size, too." I had known her for many years, and had admired her cleanliness and neatness. I had known, too, how miserable her earnings were, and how many demands her aged mother made upon her. She was upright in carriage, and of good appearance ; self-respecting, and eminently respectable, she carried her secret nobly, though the dual burden of size twelves and men's tennis-shoes must have been very trying. I told her of our arrangement about the last, but, of course, made no reference to the dimensions of her feet ; but I often wonder how she felt when she put on her new boots.

CHAPTER XIII

JONATHAN PINCHBECK, THE SLUM AUTOLYCUS

IT was application time in a London police-court. All sorts of people, with all sorts of difficulties, had stepped, one after another, into the witness-box, and had put all sorts of questions to the patient magistrate. They had gone away more or less satisfied with the various answers the experience of the magistrate suggested, when, last of all, there stepped in front of him a quaint-looking elderly man. Below the average size, with a body somewhat bent, grey hair, and a bristly white moustache, together with a complexion of almost terra-cotta hue, he was bound to attract attention. When looked at more closely, other characteristics could be noted : his lips were full and tremulous, his eyes were strained, and there was a look of pathetic expectancy over his face.

He handed a paper to the magistrate, and said : "Read that, your Worship." His Worship read it. It was an order from the relieving officer to the manager of the "stone-yard" for Jonathan Pinchbeck to be given two days' work. "Jonathan Pinchbeck ! is that your name ?" said the magis-

trate, looking at the quaint old man. "Yes, that's me." "Well, what do you want? Why don't you go and do the work?" "Well, your Worship, it is like this: I have been to the stone-yard, and they have got no work to give me." "Well," said the magistrate, "I am sure that I have no stones for you to break." "But I don't want you to give me work! I ask you for a summons against the Vestry for four shillings," he said. "Surely they are bound to find me work or give me the money. I am out of work, and my wife is ill."

The magistrate told him that the matter could not be decided in a police-court, and that he had better go to the County Court. Very dejectedly the old man stepped down, and silently left the court. I followed him, and had some conversation with him. He was a dock-labourer, but had grown old, and could no longer "jostle," push, and fight for a job at the dock gates, for younger men with broader shoulders stepped up before him. He gave me his address, so in the afternoon of the same day I went to Mandeville Street, Clapton Park. The landlady told me that Pinchbeck was not at home, but that he occupied with his wife one room "first-floor front," and that his wife was an invalid.

I was about to leave when a husky voice from the first-floor front, the door of which was evidently open, called out: "Is it a gentleman to see Jonathan? Tell him to come up." I went up. I shall not forget going up, for I found myself in the queerest place I had visited. I was in Wonderland. The owner of the voice that called me up, Mrs. Pinchbeck, sat before me—huge, massive, and

palpitating. She was twenty stone in weight, but ill and suffering. Asthma, dropsy, and heart disease had nearly done their work. It was a stifling day in July, and she drew breath with difficulty.

She sat on a very strongly-made wooden chair, and did not attempt to rise when I entered the room. The chair in which she was sitting was painted vermillion red, and studded with bright brass nails. Every chair in the room—of which there were four—the strong kitchen table, the strong wooden fender, and the powerful bedstead, were all vermillion red, embellished with brass nails. One directing mind had constructed the lot. When my surprise was lessened, I sat down on a red chair beside the poor woman, and entered into conversation. Her replies to my questions came with difficulty, but, despite her illness, I noticed that she was proud of her quaint husband, and especially proud of the furniture he had made for her, for the household goods were his workmanship.

“He had only a saw, a hammer, and some sandpaper,” she said, nodding at the furniture, “and he made the lot.”

They were well-built, and calculated to bear even Mrs. Pinchbeck. “Vermilion red was his favourite colour,” she said, “and he thought the bright yellow of the nails livened them up. They had been made a good many years, but he sometimes gave them a fresh coat of paint.”

Pinchbeck and she had been married many years ; they had no children. They lived by themselves, and he was a very good husband. But

there were other wonders in the room beside the poor woman and the brilliant furniture, and they soon claimed attention.

In front of me stood a monumental cross some feet in height, and made apparently of brown marble. The cross stood on three foundation steps of brown marble, and at intervals round the body of the cross were bands of yellow ribbon.

She saw me looking at it. "That's all tobacco," she said; "it is made of cigar-ends." There was a descriptive paper attached to the cross. "Jonathan collected the cigar-ends, and he made them into that monument, and he made the calculations in his head, and I wrote them down," she said, referring to the paper. "He walked more than ninety thousand miles to collect the cigar-ends," she said. I asked permission to read the descriptive paper attached, and after permission—for I saw the whole thing was sacred to the suffering woman—I detached it. I was lost in interest as I read the paper, which was well written, and contained some curious calculations. I found on inquiry that Jonathan could neither read nor write, but he could, as she said, "calculate in his own head."

The document consisted of a double sheet of foolscap, which was covered on the four pages with writing and figures in a woman's hand. Briefly it told of the great deeds of Jonathan, who, as I have previously said, was a dock-labourer. He had lived in Clapton Park for more than thirty years, and he had walked every day to and from the East London Docks, a five-mile tramp every morning, and a return journey at night of equal

length. Hundreds of times his journey had been fruitless, so far as getting a day's work was concerned ; but, like an industrious bee, Jonathan returned home every night laden with what to him was sweeter than honey—cigar-ends that he had gathered from the pavements, gutters, and streets he traversed and searched during his daily ten-mile tramp. They lay before me, converted into a massive monumental cross, erected upon three great slabs of similar material. On each side of it stood a smaller cross, as if it were to show off the dimensions of the great cross. The paper stated that the whole of the cigar-ends collected weighed one hundredweight and three-quarters. It also told how far the cigars would have reached had they been placed end to end ; one cigar was reckoned at three inches, four to a foot, twelve to a yard, and seven thousand and forty to a mile. The paper also told how much they cost at two-pence each, how long they took to smoke at one half-hour each, also how much duty the Government had received on each at four shillings per pound. Thirty years of interminable tramping, with his eyes on the ground like a sleuth-hound, had Jonathan done. Hour after hour he had sat in his little home contemplating his collection, and making his mental calculations while his wife wrote them down, and then in its glory arose his great monument.

Handing the paper to Mrs. Pinchbeck, I proceeded to examine the cross. I felt it, and found it hard, solid, firm, and every edge square and sharp. I wondered how he had converted such unlikely materials as cigar-ends into such a solid piece of

work. The poor woman told me that from all the cigar-ends he brought home he trimmed off the burnt ends, and carefully placed them in a dry place ; then he made a great wooden frame, screwed together, the inside of which represented the cross. In this frame he arranged end-ways layer after layer of his cigar-ends, pressing them and even hammering them in ; now and again he had poured in also a solution of treacle and water, placing more cigar-ends until it was pressed and hammered full. Then it was left for months to slowly dry. It was a proud day for the couple when the wooden frame was removed, and the great triumph of Jonathan's life stood before them.

But the tobacco cross did not by any means exhaust the wonders of the room. All round strange things were hanging from the ceiling, threaded on a string like girls thread beads and boys thread horse-chestnuts—rough, flat-looking things, about the size of a plate and of a dirty brown colour. “ Whatever have you got there, hanging from the ceiling ?” I said. The answer came in a hoarse whisper : “ Tops and bottoms.” Tops and bottoms ! tops and bottoms ! I looked at them, and cudgelled my brains to find out what tops and bottoms were. I had to give it up, and the hoarse whisper came again : “ Tops and bottoms.” There the “ tops ” hung like a collection of Indian scalps, and there hung the “ bottoms ” like a collection of burned pancakes. On examining one string of them, I found attached the inevitable paper, on which was written “ 1856.”

“ Oh,” I said, “ these are the tops and bottoms

of your bread. Why did you cut your bread in that way?" "It was Jonathan's fancy," she said. It might have been her husband's idea, but she had entered heartily into it, for she had saved the crusts from all their loaves ; she had written the papers and particulars that were attached to them, and she was proud of the old crusts, some of which dated from the time of the Crimean War. I was prepared for other strange whims after my experience with the vermillion furniture, the tobacco cross, and the "tops and bottoms," and it was well that I was, for other revelations awaited me. I found a great bundle of sugar papers—coarse, heavy papers, some blue, others grey—neatly folded, tied together, and tabulated. These were the wrappers that had contained all the sugar the worthy couple had bought during their married life. A document attached gave particulars of their weight, told also of how much they had been defrauded by the purchase of paper and not sugar, told the price of sugar in various years, and the variations of their losses. Next to these stood a pile of tea-wrappers, tabulated and ticketed in exactly the same manner. Mr. and Mrs. Pinchbeck had evidently a just cause of complaint against the grocers.

I cannot possibly reveal the whole contents of the room. Had a local auctioneer been called in to make a correct inventory, he would surely have fled in despair. Every available square inch of the room was fully occupied with strange objects. In one corner was a pile of nails—cut nails and wrought nails, French nails and old "tenpenny" nails, barndoors nails and dainty wire nails—col-

lected from the streets during Jonathan's long life. They told the industrial history of those years, and spoke eloquently of the improvement that had taken place even in nail-making. They told, too, of the poor home-workers of Cradley Heath, and of the women and children who had made them. Beside the nails was a heap of screws—poor old blunted rusty things, made years before Mr. Chamberlain introduced his improved pointed screws, lying mingled with the screws of present use, bright, slender, and genteel. Here was a heap of shoe-tips, some of which had done duty forty years ago in protecting the heels and toes of cumbrous boots that had stumbled and resounded on the cobble-stone streets of those days. They, too, had a tale to tell, for Blakey's protectors lay there mingled with old, heavy, rusty tips that had protected "wooden shoon" in the days of long ago.

Decidedly, Jonathan was a modern Autolycus, a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles." He had almost established a corner in hairpins. There they were, six hundred thousand of them, neatly arranged in starch boxes, nicely oiled to prevent rust, box after box of them, every box weighed and counted, the whole lot weighing, so the descriptive paper says, two and a half hundred-weight: hairpins from St. James's and Piccadilly—for Jonathan, when work was scarce, had on special occasions searched with magnetic eye the El Dorado of the West—hairpins from the narrow streets of the East; hairpins from suburban thoroughfares; hairpins from the pavements of the City; old, massive hairpins that would

almost have tethered a goat ; demure, slender hairpins that would nestle snugly in the hair, and adapt themselves comfortably to the head ; hairpins plain and hairpins corrugated—there they lay.

I was lost in wonder and imagination, and forgot the nasty cigar-ends in picturing to myself the world of beauty that had worn and the delicate hands that had adjusted those hairpins. But the hairpins were not alone in their glory. Hat-pins claimed attention, too. Cruel, fiendish things they looked, as they lay closely packed in several boxes, with their beaded ends and sharp, elongated points. I turned quickly from these, for I knew only too well the fresh terror they added to life—especially to a policeman's life. So I proceeded to examine the next department—“babies' comforters”—with mingled feelings : two large boxes full of them, horrible things!—ivory rings, bone rings, rubber rings, and vulcanite rings, with their suction tubes attached, made to deceive infant life, and to enable English babies to feed on air. Some day a similar collection may form a valuable addition to a museum, illustrating the fraud practised on babies in the twentieth century.

I forgot the presence of poor asthmatical Mrs. Pinchbeck on her red chair, for the shelves that were fixed on the walls attracted me. These were heavily laden with glass jars and bottles of various sizes containing specimens of bread, sugar, tea, coffee, butter, and cheese of varying dates. “Bread, 1856, 10d. per loaf, Crimean War.” “Tea, 1856, 4s. 6d. per pound.” “Sugar

(brown), 1856, 6d. per pound." So ran some of the descriptions that were attached to the various jars. But I had to leave the examination of these till another time, when still more wonders were revealed, of which I must tell you later.

Bidding Mrs. Pinchbeck "Good-afternoon," and promising her another visit, I left her, for other suffering and troubled folk needed me. Alas ! that was the only time I saw the poor woman, for not much longer was she able to rise from her bed, and in a few weeks there was a strange funeral, at which Jonathan was chief mourner, and he was left alone and friendless.

Hard times followed ; old age crept on. Failing health and lack of nourishment combined to make Jonathan of less value in the labour market, so by-and-by he faced starvation. But by no means did he give up collecting ; his useless stores grew and grew until he had no longer room to store them. Then he sold his pile of nails for a few shillings ; his screws and tips followed suit, and some of the fruits of his industry vanished.

Sad to relate, a worse fate befell his cigar-ends, and the great triumph of his life—his "monumental cross"—brought a second great sorrow into the poor fellow's life. It occurred to him that he might obtain money by exhibiting his work, so he hired a barrow, and, packing his crosses on it, went into the streets to attract attention and collect coppers. He secured plenty of attention, especially from boys, who made a "mark" of the old man ; ribald youth scoffed at him ; policemen moved him on—but the other "coppers" came not to him. The barrow cost

one shilling per week. A crisis had arrived ; he must sell his tobacco. At eleven o'clock one night I found him at my front door. There stood the barrow and the tobacco. He wanted my advice about selling it. It was the only thing to do. He had received notice to leave his room, and must look for a smaller home at a less rental. The next day slowly and reluctantly Jonathan pushed his barrow to Shoreditch. He had found a wholesale tobacconist who might buy his tobacco at a price. "Bring it in," he said, "and I will look at it." Jonathan took it in. Jonathan was taken in, too. "Leave it here till to-morrow, and I will decide," said the merchant. It was left, and Jonathan pushed an empty barrow on the return journey. His room seemed empty that night ; his wife was dead, and now his monumental cross was gone. The next day he visited the tobacco merchant, and found an officer of the Inland Revenue waiting for him. The merchant had informed. Pinchbeck's tobacco was impounded, and he himself was threatened with proceedings for attempting to sell tobacco without holding a licence. In vain the poor old man protested ; in vain he argued and proved that his tobacco had paid duty, and that the State had received its dues. His tobacco was detained, and Jonathan saw it no more. Poor old Jonathan ! How he cried over it ! But the next day he turned up at the police-court and asked for a summons against the Inland Revenue for detaining his tobacco, and here again disappointment awaited him, for the magistrate had no jurisdiction. It was a heavy blow to him ; his heart appeared to

be broken, and all interest in life seemed to have gone. I sympathized with him, and did my best to cheer him. He moved to a smaller home, again parting with some of his museum. For a brief time he struggled on, but he became ill.

For some months he lay in the workhouse infirmary, alone and unfriended, and I thought the streets of London would know his peering eyes no more. But there was more vitality in the old man than I expected. One cold winter's day, when the snow was falling, I met a melancholy procession of sandwich-men on Stamford Hill, among whom was Jonathan. The wind buffeted him, and his hands and his face were blue with cold. "I could not stand it any longer; I should have died if I had not come out," he told me when I asked as to his welfare. He gave me his address, and the quaint old man and I were again on visiting terms. Where he had bestowed his strange collection during his sojourn in the workhouse I never ascertained, but the bulk of it was in his new home. His things had been taken care of, he said, but no more. "How are you going to live?" "They allow me three shillings and sixpence from 'the house,' and I must pick up the rest." So he proceeded to pick up, for his health improved and his collection grew; but he did not pick up much money. The spring came, and Jonathan grew young again. One fine morning I met him, looking quite fresh and debonair. "Why, Jonathan," I said, "I really did not know you. How well and fresh you look!" "Yes, bless the Lord! He gives me strength to walk." "I wonder why He does

that ?" I foolishly said ; but I expected the answer I got. "To find things that nobody else would find, and to prove that teetotallers are fools," he said. "But, Jonathan, I am a teetotaller." "I can't help that, can I ? Look here, you can tell me how many gallons of water there is in a barrel of beer, but you can't tell me how much paper you bought when you thought you were buying tea and sugar." I humbly admitted my ignorance, and asked him what he was finding. "All sorts of things. Come in and see them when you are down my way." I went again to his "palace of varieties," and saw a cross of about eighteen inches high, standing in a neat wooden base, which was painted a bright vermillion, and a smaller cross made of cigarette-ends standing beside it. Pointing to the latter, he said : "That's to lie on my breast when I am in my coffin, and that" (the bigger one) "is to lie on my coffin when I'm buried. I don't want any wreaths." Small chance of wreaths at a parish funeral when this, our dear brother, is unceremoniously committed to the earth, I thought ; but he was fearful about his tobacco. "You won't tell, will you ? Don't give the show away," he said. I advised him not to offer the tobacco for sale this time. "Not me ; I'll die first," he promptly replied.

His cigar and cigarette ends amounted to over thirty pounds in weight, which he had pressed into various shapes. A strange piece of architecture, with many turrets and towers, all shining like burnished silver, claimed attention. "What have you here ?" "Five hundred empty milk-

tins. I have saved them all. They have all been full. I always use the 'Milkmaid' brand." "I suppose you alter your plan of your building sometimes?" "Oh yes," he said; "I make cathedrals sometimes."

Twenty-four flat cardboard boxes, with covers on, attracted me. "What have you got in these boxes?" "Ah! I have got something to show you," and he proceeded to take off the lids. One look dazzled me, for never in my life had I seen such a weird combination of brilliant colours; the old vermillion seemed quite pale and insipid in comparison. Blues, greens, yellows, and pinks of every shade predominated; but almost every other colour and shade of colour was represented, and their combined effect was stupendous. Some of the boxes were full of little cubes, others of narrow strips; some full of flat pieces about one inch square; others with the same substance graduated in different sizes. "All orange-peel, Mr. Holmes, picked up in the streets; all of it would have been wasted but for me." "But what good is it now?" I asked. He looked sadly at me, and said: "Good, good! Why, it shows what can be done." Whether it was worth the doing did not concern him; but my question had offended him, so I had to make peace. Half a crown soothed his wounded feelings. I then asked him how he did it all. "Picked 'em up, flattened 'em, cut 'em up, and coloured 'em," was all I could get out of him. "Do you know what's in these boxes?" producing four boxes of similar pattern, and opening them. They contained small cubes of material, and their colours,

at any rate, were of modest hue. I confessed again my ignorance. "Taste!" I was much alarmed, but I tasted. "Potatoes?" "Right," he said. "That's how I save all my potatoes. They do to put in my broth." "But how do you get them all to this size and colour?" I asked. "That's my secret," he said. I asked him if he was saving "tops and bottoms" now. "Only the new uns; I have made use of the old uns. I'll show you." He went on his knees, and from a store under his bed he produced several three-pound glass jars full of some brown meal, of varying degrees of coarseness. "All good—all good food! Microbes can't live in bread fifty years old. These are 'tops and bottoms.'" He had broken up his old bread, pounded it with a hammer, put the crumbs through different sized sieves, and stored the resulting material in glass jars. "Beats Quaker Oats, Grape Nuts, and 'Sunny Jim,'" he said. "I can stand a siege. I just boil some water, take two spoonfuls of 'Milkmaid,' two tablespoonfuls of 'tops and bottoms,' and I have good milk porridge in three minutes. I have a pot of Bovril, too, and when I want some soup, hot water, Bovril, and desiccated potatoes or potato-powder give it to me. The old man is not such a fool as people think!" But again he put me into a tight place. He wanted me to buy, or find customers for, his granulated "tops and bottoms." He felt sure if people only knew how good and nice the "food" was, they would buy it readily.

I had to change the subject, and asked him what was in the box over the head of his bed, so securely

attached to the wall. I was just going to handle it when he sang out: "Don't touch it! don't touch it, or you'll blow up the whole house!" "What is it?" "Explosives," he said. "I may want them; I'm not going to the workhouse again." I did not touch them, but got away as far as possible. Jonathan then produced an ordinary medicine-bottle, about half full of some liquid. "That's the last bottle the doctor ever sent my wife, and half of it was enough. I'm saving the other half; I may require it. No workhouse or parish doctor for me." I began to feel creepy; but the old man continued: "Lift that little bucket out of the corner, and tell me what's in it." I lifted it, and examined it, and said: "It is three parts full of charcoal, on the top of which is a quantity of sulphur. There is a piece of candle fixed in the sulphur and a box of matches attached to the handle of the bucket."

"Right," he said. "When my food is gone, I may put that bucket beside my bed, lock my door, light that candle, and lie down to sleep. I may do that, or I may blow the show up, or I may take that half-bottle of medicine. I haven't decided yet."

There was no appearance of boasting or jesting about the old man; his lips quivered, and he evidently meant what he said. But life has too much interest for him at present, and so long as he can find things and employ his strange talents in strange ways, Jonathan will not hasten his end. But when the streets know him no more, when his fading eyesight and his dwindling strength prevent him finding things, when he

feels his dependence on others and can no longer burnish his milk-cans, then, and not before then, Jonathan will make his choice, and he may light his candle.

But the end was not yet, neither did it come in catastrophic fashion. I had not seen him for months, but, wishing to know how the old man was getting on, I ran down to his little home to renew our acquaintance ; but he had disappeared, for the workhouse infirmary had received him.

THE PASSING OF JONATHAN.

Poor old Jonathan ! The byways and thoroughfares of London know him no longer. Hairpins lie in scattered profusion on our pavements East and West, and babies' comforters may be seen in the mud and slime of our gutters ; but hairpins and comforters lie unheeded, for Jonathan has passed.

The peering eyes, the quaint face, the bent body, and the bulging pockets of my old friend are now memories, for Jonathan has passed. Poor old Jonathan ! my heart goes out to him as I think of him in his new and last earthly home—surely the saddest of all earthly homes—a lunatic asylum ; for I know that even there his heart is with his treasures, and his poor brains are concerned about the mass of things he had been so long in collecting, and the rubbish that he had so passionately loved. Fifty long years ago he commenced his self-imposed task ; fifty years, with bent back and eyes on the ground, had he traversed thousands of miles with wearied feet, but with a brave and expectant heart.

Load after load he had carried home as he returned day after day to his little hive, like a bee laden with honey. Who can estimate the amount of interest and even pleasure he had experienced during those fifty years, as he added little by little to his great store ? Surely the joy that a collector of curios experiences was no stranger to the heart of Jonathan. And now the asylum ! It is all too sad ; we could wish it far otherwise.

But Jonathan has some compensations, for he lives in the past, and joys in the knowledge of what he has accomplished ; but he does not know the cruel fate of his great collection, and surely it is to be wished that a kindly Providence may preserve him from the knowledge, for such knowledge would bring to him the greatest sorrow of his life. So in the asylum Jonathan's heart is with his treasures ; they still exist, and their value is "beyond the price of rubies."

Jonathan grew feebler. With increasing age sandwich-boards grew too heavy for him, and the grasshopper became a burden when it was discovered that kind friends, for charity's sake, supplemented the miserable sum (three shillings and sixpence) allowed him weekly by the "parish," and which served to pay his rent ; and this discovery was brought to the knowledge of the said "parish" ; then the "parish," with all the humanity it was capable of, stopped the allowance, and Jonathan was left to his own exertions. So he got behind with his rent ; his worries increased ; he got less food and of a poorer quality, and illness came upon him. By-and-by the dreaded day arrived when the gates of a great workhouse

opened for him and closed upon him. Jonathan was separated from his treasures. This was the unkindest cut of all, and it proved too much for his tottering reason, and the infirmary ward of the great workhouse was supplanted by a ward in a well-known pauper lunatic asylum, where it is to be hoped that Jonathan's days will be few. The old man had for many years been a great sufferer, and it has always been a marvel to me how he went through his innumerable wanderings and tasks, subject always to a great physical disability and intense pain.

I have previously told my readers that Jonathan could not read or write : his wonderful memory enabled him to dispense with those requirements ; but he could not forget, neither does he forget now, so his treasures have acquired an added value. No fabled cave ever contained the riches that his poor home contains. Day by day they increase in value, and he lives in the certain hope that some portion may be sold, that the "parish" may be repaid for the cost he imposed on it, and that some friendly hand will knock at the door of the asylum, and some friendly voice will cry, "Open, sesame," that he may come forth a free man to join the residue of his quaint collection. And it is well, poor old Jonathan ! that thou shouldst live in this belief, and that thou shouldst hug those delusions, for in thy case a false hope is better far than a knowledge of the truth. Live on, then, quaint old man, long or short as the days may be—live on in the world of thy own creating.

But to my friends who may read this sketch

of real life, the plain, unvarnished truth is due. Jonathan's accumulation of treasures passed into the fiery furnace of the local dust-destructor, and from thence leapt into thin air or emerged as "clinkers." It sorely puzzled the "parish," which had disposed of Jonathan, how to dispose of Jonathan's effects, but it promptly annexed the vermillion chairs. The parish labourers, not behind time, promptly annexed the tobacco, and the "crosses," that were to lie "one on my breast inside the coffin and one on the lid," disappeared, to be devoted, doubtless, to a less honourable cause.

But the hairpins that had nestled in the hair of many fair ladies no one would look at; no scrap merchant would buy them; so into the fiery furnace of the dust-destructor they went. Hatpins—instruments of torture, weapons of offence or defence, that had added many a danger to life—followed the hairpins. Babies' comforters—the fiery furnace roared for them, and licked its hot lips as it sucked them in. Think of it, mothers, who mock your children with such civilized productions! "Tops and bottoms," hoary scalps of fifty years ago, "granulated tops and bottoms," that drove "Sunny Jim" to despair, had scant consideration. In they went, and the flames leapt higher and higher as box after box of Jonathan's treasure fed them, till, "like the baseless fabric of a vision," they dissolved, and "left not a wrack behind."

But the "parish" looked suspiciously at and walked warily round the box of explosives where-with Jonathan had the means of "blowing up the

blooming show." This was carefully deposited in a cistern of water before it was carried off. But the fiery dragon at the dust-destructor refused the "Milkmaid" milk-tins, and, alone in their glory, sole representatives of Jonathan's power, they remained in Jonathan's room, for even the dust-collector fought shy of them. Like pyramids they stood as silent witnesses of the past. How they missed Jonathan ! Their lustre was tarnished ; there was no friendly hand to polish them now ; neither was there any subtle brain to devise new styles of architecture for them. Well had it been for the "Milkmaids" if they had suffered the fiery fate of their many companions, for a far worse fate awaited them ; for when the nights were dark, and fogs deadened sound, Jonathan's old landlady would steal craftily with an apron full of "Milkmaids," and drop one in the gutter, throw others over the garden-walls, dispose of some on pieces of unoccupied ground, till all were gone. The painter and paperhanger were afterwards required in Jonathan's room.

CHAPTER XIV

PEOPLE WHO HAVE "COME DOWN"

LONDON's abyss contains a very mixed population. Naturally the "born poor" predominate, of whom the larger portion are helpless and hopeless, for environment and temperament are against them.

Amongst these, but not of these, exists a strange medley of people who have "come down" in life. Drunkenness, fast living, gambling, and general rascality have hurried many educated men into the abyss; and such fellows descend to depths of wickedness and uncleanness that the gross and ignorant poor cannot emulate, for nothing I have met in life is quite so disgusting and appalling as the demoralized educated men living in Inferno.

Misfortune, sorrow, ill-health, loss of friends, position or money, and ill-advised speculations, are often prime causes of "descent," producing pitiful lives and strange characters; while others—sometimes women, sometimes men—have been cursed by very small annuities, not sufficient for living purposes, but quite sufficient to prevent them attempting any honest labour. Often these

are ashamed to work, but by no means ashamed to beg. Clinging to the rags of their gentility, they exhibit open contempt for the ignorant poor, who treat them with awesome respect, because "they have come down in life."

The postman brings them numerous letters—replies to their systematic begging appeals—and not before a detective calls to make inquiries do the poor question the *bona fides* of, or lose their respect for, "the poor lady upstairs."

Backboneless men and women in a moral sense are numerous in the abyss, with no vices, but with virtues of a negative character. Possessing no grit, no adaptability, no idea of making a fight for life, they appear to think that because their parents were well-to-do, and they themselves had "received" an education, it is somebody's business to keep them. They are as sanguine as Mr. Micawber, always expecting something to "turn up," but never proceeding to turn up anything on their own account.

Waiting, hoping, starving, they go down to premature death—if, indeed, the workhouse infirmary does not swallow them alive.

But what courage and endurance, what industry and self-respect others exhibit, deprived by death or misfortune of the very means of existence, brought face to face with absolute poverty ! Men and women, precipitated into the abyss through no fault of their own, shine resplendent in the dark regions they have been forced to inhabit. Not soured by misfortune, not despondent because of disappointment, hand in hand and heart to heart, I have seen elderly

couples living in one-roomed homes, joining bravely in the great struggle for existence.

Others are made bitter by their misfortune, and nurse a sense of their grievances ; they "keep themselves to themselves," and generally put on airs and graces in any dealings they may have with their neighbours. They quickly resent any approach to friendship ; any kindness done to them is received with freezing politeness, and any attempt to search out the truth with regard to their antecedents is the signal for storm. Personally, I have suffered much at the hands of scornful ladies "who have come down." Sometimes I am afraid that my patience and my temper have been exhausted when dealing with them, for such ladies require careful handling.

Experience is, however, a great teacher, and I learned at least to bear myself with becoming humility when such ladies condescended to receive at my hands any help that I might be able to give.

"Do you know, sir, that you are speaking to an officer's daughter ? How dare you ask me for references ! My word is surely good enough for a Police-Court Missionary. You are a fitting representative of your office. Please leave my room."

I looked at her. She was over sixty, and there was the unmistakable air about her that told of better days. She was starving in a little room situated in a little court—not St. James's. She owed a month's rent to people who were poor and ill, and who had two epileptics in the family ; and now their worries were increased by the loss of rent, and the knowledge that they had a starving

"lady" upstairs. She had brought down to the abyss to keep her company a grandchild, a pretty boy of seven. I sat still, and she continued : "I know I am poor, but still I have some self-respect, and I will not be insulted. References, indeed?" "Well, madam," I at length ventured to say, "you sought my help; I did not seek you." "Yes; and I made a great mistake. Sir, are you going?" "No, madam, I am not going at present, for I am going to pay the rent you owe the poor, suffering people below. Shame on you! Have you no thought for them? How are they to pay their rent if yours remains unpaid? Please don't put on any airs, and don't insult me, or I will have you and the child taken to the workhouse. Find me your rent-book."

She sat down and cried. I called the child to me, and from my bag produced some cake, fruit, and sweets, filling the child's pinafore. He instantly began to eat, and running to the irate lady, said : "Look, grandma, what the gentleman has given me! Have some—do have some, grandma."

That was oil on the fire.

"I knew you were no gentleman; now I know that you are a coward. You know that I cannot take them away from the child." I said : "I should be ashamed of you if you had, and I should have left your room and never re-entered it. See how the child is enjoying those grapes! Do have some with him. Let us be friends. Bring your grandma some grapes." And as the child came to her, I saw the light of love in her old eyes—that wonderful love of a grandmother. The child's enjoyment of the food conquered her: the child

"beguiled her, and she did eat"; but she considered I had taken a mean advantage, and she never thoroughly forgave me—never, though we became cool friends.

I found the utmost difficulty in obtaining her confidence, although I visited her many times, and removed her most pressing wants.

She was always on heights to which I could not hope to attain, and she treated me with becoming, but freezing, dignity. I wanted to be of assistance to her, but she made my work difficult and my task thankless. When I called upon her one day to pay a week's rent, etc., she said in a lofty way : "Small assistance is of little use to me, but I can't expect anything better from one in your position." I put up with the snub, and humbly told her that it would be possible for me to do more if she would condescend to give me the names and addresses of her friends.

This bare suggestion was enough. She rose majestically, opened the room door, and in a dramatic manner said, "Go!" I sat still, and examined some needlework she was doing for a factory. Beautiful work it was—all done by hand. I knew that she would not earn more than one penny per hour, for her eyes were getting dim, and the room was not well lighted. So I talked about her work and her pay. Many times since that day have I been glad that I stayed on after that unceremonious "Go," for I learned a lesson worth the knowing, for as I sat the postman's tap-tap was heard, and the epileptic girl from below brought up a letter. "Excuse me, sir, while I read this," she said. I, of course, bowed acqui-

escence, and watched her while she read. I saw her tremulous fingers and quivering face. Presently she sat down ; the letter and a ten-pound note dropped on the floor. For a moment she sat quite silent, then the tears burst forth. She rose, picked up the letter and note, and her eyes flashed as she cried : "Read that ! read that ! and then dare to ask me for a reference." She threw the letter at me. It was from an old servant of hers, who was a cook for a regimental officers' mess, getting forty pounds a year. This is the letter :

" DEAR MRS. ——,

" Yesterday I received my quarter's salary, and I am sending it to you, hoping that you will kindly receive it as a small acknowledgment of your many kindnesses to me.

" When I think of the happy days I spent in your service, of your goodness to everyone in trouble, and of the beautiful home you have lost, I cannot rest night or day. I wish I could send you a hundred times as much, that I might really help you and the dear little boy."

The letter was better than any testimonial ; it was too much for me. "Madam," I said, "I am very sorry that I hurt your feelings by questioning you. That letter makes me ashamed. It more than answers any questions I put to you. Will you kindly lend me the letter, that I may show it to my friend ?"

She looked triumphant, and said that I might have the letter for a short time. I sent the letter

to ladies and gentlemen who had not "come down." Some old friends were found who cheerfully subscribed a sufficient sum to furnish a commodious boarding-house in a fashionable watering-place, so she again had a beautiful home of her own. But she was very "touchy," and I had no pleasant task in making arrangements. She never gave me the least credit, and it always appeared that she was conferring favours by allowing me the privilege of consulting her.

However, the boarding-house was ready at last. She entered possession, and with some help prepared to receive visitors. My wife, myself, and some friends were her first "paying guests," paying, of course, the usual charges. We spent a miserable three weeks. We were not of the class she wanted and had been used to ; she kept us in our places. I had to speak to her, and treat her as a distinguished, but quite unknown, lady. We were all glad when our time for leaving came ; neither have we paid her another visit.

She was a remarkable woman, indomitable, industrious, and clever : cooking, or managing a house, needlework, dressmaking, or anything pertaining to woman's life, she was equal to ; but her superiority was too much for us all. We could not live up to it—the strain was too great.

She, however, did us a great honour the day previous to our leaving. As a special favour, she invited us to take tea with her in the "boudoir." The remembrance of that occasion remains with me through the years. She prepared not only a nice little tea, with cream, knick-knacks, etc., but the room was tastefully decorated, and she was

suitably arrayed. Her old silks and laces had been renovated, her old jewellery polished and attended to ; and at a definite time, after a formal invitation, we were ushered into the " boudoir." She rose and gracefully bowed as we were announced, and directed us to our seats. We had a stiff time of it. No doubt it was good discipline for us all, for we realized more fully than ever the inferiority of our birth, breeding, and manners.

Poor woman ! She never forgave us for knowing that she had been in the " abyss," neither did she ever forgive me for helping her out. Our acquaintance ended with that five o'clock tea in her " boudoir." She has not written to me, neither have I inquired after her. Freely will I forgive her all the snubs and insults she flung at me if she will " keep her distance." She was a terror. One in a lifetime is quite sufficient for me.

Still, she was a good woman, and I can only suppose that privations and disappointments had on the one side embittered her, and on the other had developed a natural feeling until it became a craze, and the idea of being a " lady " dominated her existence.

Some men, too, that have come down are by no means pleasant companions—often the reverse. Several clergymen that I saw much of were too terrible for words, so I pass them ; but of one I must tell, for when I called on him in the early afternoon, he was lying on a miserable bed, un-washed, wearing a cassock. Penny packets of

cigarettes—five for a penny—were strongly in evidence. There being no chairs in the room, I sat down upon an inverted packing-case.

He rose from his bed, lit another cigarette, and asked me what I wanted. I had previously spoken to his wife, and had made up my mind that she was demented. I had seen a big-headed girl of seventeen, with a vacant face and thick, slobbering lips, nursing and laughing over a little doll. I had also spoken to a cunning-looking boy of fourteen. I had now to speak to a demoralized clergyman.

I felt that a horsewhip was needed more than the monetary help that I was commissioned to offer from friends, on certain conditions being complied with.

He was a choice specimen of manhood : his reading seemed confined to penny illustrated papers of a dubious kind, embellished with questionable pictures. He no sooner learned that friends had empowered me to act for them than his estimate of himself went up considerably. His market value went up also.

Thirty shillings per week was not enough ; he was not to be bought at the price. He must also have his wardrobe replenished. The Bishop must find him a curacy. No, he would not leave London. Preaching to intelligent people was his vocation. He was a Welshman, but London was good enough for him. I sat on the box and listened ; the vacant-faced girl with her doll sat on another box in front of me ; the clergyman in his cassock, cigarette in his fingers while he talked, and in his lips when he was silent, sat

on the edge of the bed ; and his demented wife stood by.

Such was my introduction to the fellow, of whom I saw much during the next three years ; but every time I met him I became the more enamoured of the horsewhip treatment.

For three years he received more than generous help from friends of the Church, who were anxious for his good, and more than anxious that no scandal should come upon the Church they loved. It was all in vain, and the last sight I had of him was in Tottenham, where I studiously avoided him ; but, nevertheless, I had opportunities of watching him. He stood outside a public-house. He wore an old clerical coat, green and greasy ; his clerical collar was crumpled and dirty ; his boots were old and broken, and his trousers were frayed and torn. He had a rough stick in his hand and an old cloth cap on his head. The cunning-looking boy has been in the hands of the police for snatching a lady's purse, and the imbecile girl, now a woman, continues to nurse her doll somewhere in London's abyss ; for the demented mother loves her afflicted child, and only death will part them.

Artists are numerous among those who have "come down." I never meet a poor fellow in London's streets carrying a picture wrapped in canvas without experiencing feelings of deepest pity. One look at such a man tells me whether his picture has been done to order, or whether he is seeking, rather than hoping to find, a customer. The former goes briskly enough to his destination,

and though he will receive but little payment from the picture-dealer, he sorely needs that little, and hastens to get it.

But the other poor fellow has no objective : he walks slowly and aimlessly about ; there is a wistful, shamefaced air about him. When he arrives at a picture-dealer's, he enters with reluctance and timidity. Sometimes broken-down men will hawk their pictures from door to door, and will sell decent pictures, upon which they have spent much time and labour, for a few shillings. Occasionally an alert policeman watches them, and ultimately arrests them for hawking goods and not being in possession of the necessary licence.

A boy of fourteen who was hawking his father's pictures was arrested and charged. The police had discovered that he did not hold a pedlar's licence. The pictures were quite works of art, done on pieces of cardboard about twelve inches square, some being original sketches ; others were copies of famous pictures. They were done in black-and-white, and competent judges declared that the work was exceedingly well done. The boy said his father was ill in bed, and had sent him out to sell the pictures ; his mother was dead, and his father and himself lived together in Hackney.

I went with the boy to their one room, and there, in a miserable street and in a still more miserable room, lay the artist in bed. There was nothing of any value in the room, excepting some pictures, and as I entered I found him sitting up in bed at work upon another. They had no money

at all, and that morning the boy had been sent out to try and sell the pictures and bring back food and coals. The lad's mother had died some years before, and the father and son were living together.

The father had learned no other business, and at one time there was some demand for his work, so he married. One can easily picture the life they led—the gradual shadows, the disappointments that came upon the wife, the hopeless struggle with poverty, the early death, and the misery of the husband when the partner of his poverty was taken away. Now, partly paralyzed in his legs, some days able to rise and dress himself and pay an occasional call on the "trade," and to return home more hopeless, he was glad to sell a picture for five shillings, unframed, that had cost him much effort and time.

I bought one of his pictures at a fair price, and saw that he had both food and coals, for it was winter-time. I called on him frequently, and did what I could to cheer him, and other friends bought his pictures. But he gradually grew worse in health, until the gates of one of our great infirmaries closed upon him, and the world saw him no more, and it was left to me to make some suitable provision for the boy.

One Christmas Eve some years ago there was a cry of "Police ! police !" In a little upper room in North London an elderly man had been found in a pool of blood ; his throat had been cut, and as a razor lay beside him, it was evident the injury was self-inflicted. It was a frightful gash,

but he was carried to a neighbouring hospital, where all the resources of skill and science were at hand. In three months' time he was able to stand in the dock, and evidence was given against him. He was sixty-three years of age, had on a very old frock-coat that had been originally blue, and an ancient fez that bore traces of silver braid. When the evidence had been taken, and the magistrate was about to commit him for trial, a singular-looking man stepped up, and said he was the prisoner's brother, and that he would take care of him if his Worship would discharge him. He said a friend had given his brother some drink, and it was when under the influence of the drink that the prisoner had tried to cut his own throat; that he himself was a teetotaller—and he pointed triumphantly to a piece of blue ribbon on his very shabby coat—and that he would take care that his brother had no more drink.

The magistrate very kindly accepted him as surety, and asked me to visit them, which I accordingly did, and found myself in very strange company. Three brothers were living together: sixty-five, sixty-three, and sixty were their ages. The one who had been charged was the middle brother, and was an artist; the other two were quaint individuals: they had been brought up in luxury, and now, being reduced to poverty, had not the slightest idea of how to earn a shilling.

The blue-ribbon brother was the youngest member of the family, and though he drank cold water, he appeared to have a strong aversion to its external use. He was of a religious turn of

mind, and had he exercised himself one-half as much about work as he did about religious subjects, the catastrophe that had happened might have been avoided.

The elder brother was in weak health, and walked with some difficulty. The artist was certainly by far the best man of the three ; still, they all had an air of faded gentility. Briefly, they were the sons of a well-known artist, who, many years ago, was a frequent exhibitor in the Royal Academy, and whose frescoes adorn one of the royal palaces.

After his death the three brothers and a sister lived together. Each was left an income of about twenty-five pounds per annum, and the sister managed their affairs. As long as she lived and the artist brother could sell pictures, all went fairly well ; but when she died the brothers were left to struggle for themselves. Gradually their home went down—dirt and discomfort ensued, fewer pictures were sold, and then one Christmas the artist fell into my care. What a room it was, and how hopeless it all seemed ! I found the artist himself had exhibited in the Royal Academy, and that he was undoubtedly a talented man. I found him as simple as a child, and his two brothers as innocent as babes.

I sold some of his pictures, and obtained orders for others ; but I discovered that, instead of the younger brother looking after the artist, the artist had to look after the younger brother, and I also found, to my cost, that, instead of having one unfortunate man to look after, I had three of them

on my hands. The elder brother sat reading goody books hour after hour ; the younger one went to his prayer-meetings, but never brought a shilling home ; while the artist stuck to his work, when he had any to do, splendidly.

One day I took counsel with the three of them, and we formed a committee of ways and means. To the elder one I said : "What are you going to do to bring a little grist to this mill ?" In a sweetly simple manner, and rubbing his hands, he said : "Oh, I read while Charles paints." To the younger one I said : "What are you going to do to help the finances ?" "Oh," he said, "I'll write some texts of Scripture on cardboard, and you can sell them for me." It was a quaint sight to see this band of brothers go marketing, to buy their bits of meat, vegetables, etc. I have watched them, too, at their culinary preparations, and noticed that the artist himself washed the plates and dishes, and handled and cooked the food.

Their rooms are now larger, and in much better order. The paintings left by their father are more visible, for the dust and dirt have been removed. They are still living together, and the artist, without any blue ribbon on his coat, is still working away, when he can secure orders. They are quaint specimens of humanity, but I think much of them, for they are kind-hearted and gentle to each other ; there are no heart-burnings and bickerings ; poverty has not soured their dispositions, and if times are sometimes hard, they make the best of things, and hope that God will give them better days.

None the less, my artist friend has to bear the

brunt of it, and when he sells a picture he is more than willing to share his means with his helpless brothers.

One picture I have of his conveys a striking lesson. It is founded upon the old story of the Prodigal Son. A tall, gaunt, weary man, with his sandals worn out, his staff by his side, and his gourd empty, sits upon a piece of rock upon the hill-side looking down into the valley, where he sees his father's house. He is debating within himself whether or not he shall attempt to travel that last mile and reach his old home. The old home looks inviting and the gardens pleasant, and he feels impelled to go thither. Beside him is a huge cactus, and in a tree at the back of him are two vultures waiting to pick his bones.

The failure of a popular financial scheme is often accompanied by disastrous consequences to refined and elderly people.

I have met many who, being ruined by the collapse of such investments, were compelled to resort to that forlorn hope of distressed middle-aged women—some branch of sewing-machine work done at home.

The struggles they make in order to secure the pretence of an existence are often heroic, and their endeavours to maintain an appearance of respectability and comfort are great, almost passing belief.

In the great world of London life and suffering no figures stand out quite so vividly as they do, for no other class of individuals exhibit quite the same qualities of endurance and pathetic heroism.

On arriving home one Saturday I found two

women, a mother and her daughter, awaiting me, evidently in great distress. I had known them for some years, and their struggles and difficulties were familiar to me. The husband of the elder woman lay in their little home paralyzed and ill. For years the girl and her mother had supported him and maintained themselves by making children's costumes.

He had been an accountant for many years with an old-established firm, and had saved money, which he invested in the *Liberator*. Just when the smash came their troubles were intensified by the death of his old employer, and the consequent loss of his employment. A paralytic stroke came upon him, and though he recovered somewhat, he became utterly unfit for any kind of work. They received a little assistance from the *Liberator* Relief Fund, and while this lasted mother and daughter gave three months' service each, and were taught the children's costume trade. A catastrophe had now overtaken them, hence their visit to me. They had worked incessantly all the week in the hope of finishing some work and getting it to the factory before twelve on Saturday. Friday night found them behindhand. At two o'clock on Saturday morning mother and daughter lay down on their beds without removing their clothes. At five they rose again, and sat down to their machines.

The hours passed, their task made progress, and at 11.30 they finished; but the factory was far away—nearly an hour's ride on the tram-car. Still, the younger one hurried with her bundle, only to find on arriving that the factory was

closed, and that no work would be taken in till Tuesday morning. There was the rent to pay, the poor stock of provisions to be obtained, some little comfort to be got for the father, who had watched their brave but tragic struggle, and no money, after all.

My wife set food before them, and they made a pitiful pretence of eating. Their hearts were too full, though undoubtedly their stomachs were empty.

When I put a sovereign into the tremulous hand of the elder woman, they both broke down, and went away weeping.

A few weeks later the father died, and mother and daughter were left to comfort and care for each other.

Years have passed, and they still live and work together. Rising early and retiring late, they manage to "live." But the mother is getting feeble ; her eyesight and powers for work are decaying. Never murmuring or repining, the daughter bears the brunt of the battle. She works, whilst her mother goes to and from the factory. And now—in June, 1908—another catastrophe has befallen them ; for the feeble old woman has slipped and fallen from the tram-car, and lies at home with a broken arm and other injuries ; but the daughter works for both.

Sometimes my experiences of women who have "come down" have been far more unpleasant, as the following instance may serve to show :

I received a letter from a titled lady asking me to inquire into the case of two sisters who had

repeatedly appealed to her for help, and to whose appeal she had several times responded. This lady recognized the futility of sending a few pounds at intervals to two elderly women, of whom she knew nothing excepting that their father had once built a house for her. She knew, too, that their father had been in a large way of business, employing five hundred men at one time. Her ladyship also forwarded to me a letter she had received from the sisters, and asked me to find out what could be done for them, promising that if I could suggest anything reasonable, she would send me the necessary funds. Their letter was of the usual begging-letter style, telling of their own wrongs and poverty, and pleading for help on account of their dear lamented father.

Though their "dear lamented father" had been dead for twenty-nine years, I called at the address given, and found it to be an old-clothes shop in a very poor district. In the midst of old clothes and dirt I found the landlady. No, she said, the sisters did not live there. Sometimes they did a bit of needlework for her, and she allowed them to use her address for postal purposes. "They had a letter this morning?" I said. "Yes, there was one." "How many more?" "One only this morning." "Do they often have letters?" "Sometimes." "How many do they receive a week?" "What is that to you?" "Well, I come on behalf of a friend who wishes to help them. The letter they received this morning was from her, and there was money in it. How much did they give you this morning?" "Two shillings." "They work for you:

why should they give you money ?" "I have been good to them and lent them money ; they owe me a good deal ; but they have expectations." "Did you know they had 'come down' in life ?" "Oh yes, I knew." "Now, tell me, where do they live ?" "They are on the move." "What do you mean by that ?" "On the move—looking for a place." "Where did they sleep last night ?" "Somewhere close by." "Now, tell me truly as you would a friend, what do you think about them ?" "I think they are a pair of unfortunate ladies. They have been robbed." "Would you help them if you could ?" "Certainly I would." "Shall you see them to-day ?" "Oh yes ; they are sure to come in." So I gave her my address, and told her to ask the sisters to call on me. Woe to me ! I did foolishly, and had to suffer for it. In the evening when I arrived home, one of the sisters was waiting for me. She had been waiting some time, to the consternation of my wife and the maid. The front door had no sooner been opened to her imperative tap, than she marched in without any ceremony, smelling, I was told, of the public-house and dirt. My wife said : "She is in the drawing-room. I could not ask her in here : we were just having tea." I found her without any difficulty. The evidence of my nose was enough. I opened wide the window, and then looked at her, or it, or something ! I was just getting my breath, when, "Oh, you have heard from Lady —, and she is wanting to help me." I said : "Yes, and you have heard from Lady —. She sent you some money, and I see you have been spending it." "What do you

mean, sir ? I will let you know that I am a lady." I groaned and said : " You are letting me know it ; I fully realize it." " Look here, sir ; attend to me. I am going to keep a butter and cheese shop. I want twenty pounds to set me up. You must write to her ladyship for it." " Very good, then." " Now I want to tell you about our troubles ;" and she did. It took me two good hours to get her safely outside the front door, after which I gave positive orders to the whole household that in future all business with this "lady" must be transacted on the door-step, with a half-closed door.

She was a Welshwoman, and possessed a double amount of that nation's eloquence. Those two hours I shall never forget. It took all the diplomacy at my command to get her out ; but she promised to come again and bring her sister. I was terribly alarmed at the prospect, but did not tell her not to come, for my courage failed me. However, she had given me her address, which, unfortunately, was close by ; so, finally, I told her that, after hearing from Lady ——, I would call upon her and give her whatever help was sent. She called every day for a week, and every time she came my wife hid herself, and the servant was mindful of my instructions about the door. Nevertheless, our house was attracting some attention, for our respectable neighbours were alive to the situation. I often wished she had made a mistake, like poor old Cakebread did, and had gone to the wrong house ; but I did not get even that scrap of comfort. At length I sent a note to her, telling her that I was going to call

on her at ten o'clock next morning. This I accordingly did, and found that the sisters had obtained a room in the house of a poor but very decent woman who had four young children. The landlady let me in, and called to the sisters that a gentleman had come to see them. "Tell him we are not quite ready to receive visitors," I heard a familiar voice reply.

The landlady asked me to step into her room. I did so, and she carefully closed the door, and then burst out: "What can I do with them? How can I get rid of them? We shall be ill." "Have they paid you any rent?" "No; I won't take any. They gave me a shilling deposit before they moved in." "Give it to them back, and tell them to go." "They won't take it, and they won't go." "Tell your husband to put them out." "He won't touch them, and he blames me for taking them in." "Why did you take them in?" "We are poor; I am going to have another. I thought they were ladies who had 'come down.' They gave me a letter from a lady to read. Whatever shall we do?" "When did they come in?" "Just a week ago. They were drunk the first night. One had a black eye!"

In due time they were ready to receive visitors, and I went to their room. I knew what to expect, but it was too much for me. Phew! They were there, black eye and all. Half undressed, quite unwashed, a nice pair of harridans; no furniture saving an old rusty bedstead, on which were some rags. The thought of the poor woman below and her young children gave me courage.

"I see how it is, you old sinners. Shame on you for forcing yourselves into this poor woman's house ! You are not fit to live anywhere but in a pigsty. If you don't get out I will have the pair of you carted to the workhouse. I will see that you get no more from Lady —. If you don't get out pretty quick, I will myself put you out." One of them came forward in a threatening attitude, saying : "I will let you know that my father was your superior." I told them that I was glad I never knew their father if he at all resembled them.

I called the landlady, and told her to fetch a policeman, as they were trespassers, and had no right in her room. But the landlady said, if that was the case, her husband would put them out in the afternoon ; it being Saturday, he would be home early. Then the torrent of abuse began. They rose to the occasion, and gave vent to their feelings, I am sorry to say, in vulgar English. Had it been Welsh, it would not have mattered, but slum English expressed with Welsh fervour was too much for me. I left. I was, however, to have a still more striking proof of the power that Welsh " ladies " have to express themselves in very vulgar English, for the same evening, after having refreshed themselves, they forced an entrance when my front door responded to their knock and ring. Fortunately my wife was away. I was called to interview the two " ladies " and the black eye. They were inside—there could be no mistake about that ; the door was closed, too. As soon as they saw me there was a soprano and contralto duet. " What did you write to Lady

— for ? Do you say we are dirty ? Who told you we got drunk ? Why did you come so early ? Ragged, are we ? Help to have us put out, would you ? You are a nice Christian !” I brushed past them and opened the front door. “ Fetch a policeman, will you ? We’ll have the law for you, you scoundrel ! robber ! thief !” I seized the one with the decorated eye, and out she went. In a twinkling the other sister was after her, and before they realized it, the front door was closed and bolted. Then the storm began, and for thirty-five minutes they kept it up. Every choice expression known to the black-guards of London tripped lightly but emphatically from their tongues ; sometimes in unison, sometimes in horrible discord, sometimes singly, and sometimes together they kept it up. They ran through the whole gamut of discordant notes—*fortissimo* generally, *piano* only when breath failed. When quite exhausted, one took charge of the knocker, the other of the bell, and instrumental music followed the vocal. A good many of my respectable neighbours came to the concert, but blushingly retired ; they could not stand it. I knew very well that they could not keep up the pace long ; but it was the longest thirty-five minutes I ever endured. When quite worn out and too hoarse to vocalize, they retired, and our street resumed its normal respectability. But to the valour of Wales they added the perseverance of women. After again refreshing themselves, they returned to the poor woman they had “ taken in,” and gave her a concert, much to her terror. Her husband called the police, but

this only roused them. Ultimately they were taken into custody for being drunk and disorderly, and, sad to relate, the following Monday they were fined by the magistrate.

I heard more bad language in that thirty-five minutes than I ever listened to in a month, even in a police-court. I must have received considerable mental and moral damage, and I really think that I ought to receive some compensation from Lady ——.

But, at all events, I hope that I have completed my experience of people who have "come down."



THE END

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